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ABSTRACT

This document is the first volume of two that jointly report on schools engaged in systemic reform. "Volume I: Lessons Learned" provides an indepth analysis of restructuring efforts across 10 schools participating in the Every Student Succeeds (ESS) and other state-reform initiatives. Based on a 3-year study, the volume synthesizes the major findings around several themes central to the current national systemic-reform agenda and derives implications and recommendations for schools, districts, and state and federal policymakers. The ESS initiative created a network of schools to promote change efforts aimed at improving learning for at-risk students. The first phase of the study looked broadly at school restructuring, and the second phase focused in more detail on issues related to systemic reform and serving diverse student populations. Data were gathered through site visits to 23 of the 41 ESS schools, individual and focus-group interviews with key groups, classroom observations, document analysis, and followup telephone interviews with principals. Findings underscore the two primary goals of ESS: providing access to a high-level curriculum for all students through interactive learning; and setting high standards for all students and measuring the impact of educational strategies. Schools relied upon three major strategies to provide all students with a genuine opportunity to learn. These strategies sought to: (1) create more equitable and responsive student-teacher configurations to meet the learning needs of all students; (2) enrich the curriculum and tailor instruction for all students; and (3) build the knowledge, skills, and capacity of school staff. The schools' organizational strategies, tensions and solutions, and assessment-development processes are also described. One figure and four tables are included. (Contains 21 references.) (LMI)

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a View from the Bottom Up:

School-Based Systemic Reform in California

Volume I: Lessons Learned

restructuring

standards

hands-on

equity

assessment

thematic

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A View from the Bottom Up:

School-Based Systemic Reform in California

Volume I: Lessons Learned

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May 1995

FarWest LABORATORY

For further information or additional copies of Volumes I and II, please contact:

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Preface and Acknowledgments

A View from the Bottom Up: School-Based Systemic Reform in California reports on schools in the midst of restructuring that are now shifting to embrace the next challenge: systemic reform. Two volumes comprise this report. *Volume I: Lessons Learned* provides an in-depth analysis of restructuring efforts across ten schools participating in the Every Student Succeeds (ESS) and other state reform initiatives. Based on a three-year study, this volume synthesizes the major findings around several themes central to the current national systemic reform agenda and derives implications and recommendations for schools, districts, state and federal policymakers. *Volume II: Ten Profiles* contains individual profiles of the unique restructuring experiences of these ten ESS schools. Each school profile describes the efforts undertaken and challenges faced while restructuring to ensure success for every student. Highlighted are each school's key demographic features, district and community contexts, major restructuring strategies, how the school defines and measures success and the key lessons learned for each effort. Including a list of key terms and an appendix containing examples of useful activities and tools some schools employed, this volume offers practitioners more insight into the promise and challenge of putting particular strategies into practice.

We are indebted to the many individuals in schools, districts and the California Department of Education who participated in this research effort. We also appreciate the generous time other educators and colleagues contributed to our work at various stages of our research and the development of this report. In particular, we would like to extend our warmest thanks to the individuals who helped in the production of this volume: Wade Brynelson and Margaret Fortune of the California Department of Education, Nancy Moore of Azusa Unified School District, Diane August of the National Research Council and Beverly Farr of Far West Laboratory for their feedback and insights; Kelvin Gee for the cover design; Barbara Oleksiw and Kyo Yamashiro for editorial assistance; and Freddie Baer for layout and format. A special thanks to Nancy Braham for coordinating the production of this report and overall project assistance.

Introduction

This study offers policymakers and practitioners insight into the struggles, strategies and successes of ten schools making a difference where it counts most: with a diverse student population whose full capacity for achievement has largely been left untapped. Since 1992, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development has followed ten schools as they experiment with decentralized decision-making, the reorganization of students and teachers and the improvement of teaching and learning. When this study began, many of these schools were in the midst of a reform movement referred to as "restructuring." Now, three years later, these schools have started to prepare for another reform challenge: demonstrating that all students can achieve the same high standards of academic performance. This study provides insights into their readiness to move in this direction.

The schools in this study offer valuable perspectives for practitioners and policymakers everywhere because their diverse student populations are not unlike those soon to be found in other schools across the United States. Moreover, these schools are not considered members of a vanguard of restructuring schools. Instead, they represent a cross-section of K-12 public schools found throughout California. While some are set in densely populated urban cities, others are in rural farming communities; all are experiencing increasing ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic diversity. These schools may appear to be like other schools, but many are mavericks. What sets them apart is their willingness to tackle the toughest issues facing educators today and to challenge the status quo. To ensure that their voices are not forgotten, this study documents the lessons learned from these schools' transformation as they move from the rhetoric to reality in achieving "success for all students."

These schools have not stood alone in their efforts. They have been supported by a small California Department of Education initiative called "Every Student Succeeds (ESS)." This initiative, established in 1991, created a network of schools to promote change efforts aimed at improving learning for at risk students. While participating schools receive no additional funding, they have been able to share and learn from each other as participants in the state's network meetings. These schools have also benefited from other district and state-supported technical assistance efforts. Yet, their success is largely a result of the people within them: teachers devoting long hours to planning; principals willing to subordinate to a dynamic, consensus-building planning process; education specialists training other teachers in instructional strategies for students with special

needs; and students assuming greater responsibility for constructing their own knowledge as well as helping others.

Their quest to assume greater responsibility in improving teaching and learning for all students has not been easy. Many obstacles — some imposed unintentionally by those striving to provide support — have stood in their way. However, the schools in this study have become increasingly resilient, readjusting as they face new challenges. This does not mean they do not need help. Indeed, this study offers numerous insights into the areas in which schools engaged in systemic reform need better guidance and support. Policymakers "at the top" who want to determine how best and where to support school-based reform will gain a rich view of "bottom-up" reform in looking closely at the experiences of these schools.

Purpose of the Study

This study stems from a long-standing research and evaluation focus of the Students At Risk Program at Far West Laboratory. Since its inception in 1990, this program has focused on studying reforms aimed at improving the educational outcomes of students and families in settings marked by social and economic crises. One strand of inquiry has been to examine school improvement efforts for at risk students. This examination evolved into a study of what "rethinking business" meant for schools with diverse and academically at risk students. Because schools participating in the ESS initiative fell into this category, we agreed to assist the California Department of Education in tracking their progress. As a non-funded initiative supported by department in-kind services, ESS comprises a network of districts and schools committed to at risk students. Participating districts and schools were selected using interviews and applications for another state restructuring initiative, enacted by Senate Bill 1274 (SB1274), called a "Demonstration of Restructuring in Public Education." Although initially coupled with this restructuring program, ESS emerged with its own identity and conceptual framework for school-based reform.

This qualitative three-year study was conducted in two phases. The first looked broadly at school restructuring, while the second focused in more detail on issues related to systemic reform and serving diverse student populations. The ESS conceptual framework, other research on school restructuring and literature on systemic reform helped define the major topics we examined.

The purpose of this study's first phase was exploratory and designed to glean a general understanding of the status and issues raised by restructuring schools. Program staff examined issues relating to school change and to the ESS framework, including the different ways in which schools: reorganized curriculum and instruction, were governed and managed, provided teacher professional development and coordinated community resources. From this first look at 23 schools, we learned about similar strategies schools were employing, such as reconfiguring student-teacher organizational structures into families and adopting more authentic forms of assessment. We also learned of the complicated challenges and tensions involved in trying to meet the learning needs of special needs students, especially those students designated limited English proficient (LEP), while implementing new strategies.

Findings from our first year's study led us to examine specific questions during our second phase: (1) how schools were restructuring to provide students an equal and enriched education; and (2) how student success was defined and measured. During this second phase, increased federal interest in how well schools were prepared to respond to the national push for systemic reform also influenced our line of inquiry. As a result, we explored themes common to both the ESS conceptual framework and systemic reform literature (Smith and O'Day, 1991).

Although the ESS conceptual framework employs six guiding elements, findings in this report underscore two ESS concepts integral to systemic reform efforts. Consistent with the central principle of systemic reform (Smith and O'Day, 1991), the ESS conceptual framework defines its primary goal as providing access to a high-level curriculum for all students — i.e., creating genuine opportunities for learning a rich and challenging curriculum. The ESS framework stresses that giving low-achieving students more seat time with exposure to an enriched curriculum does not necessarily accomplish equitable learning or access. Instead, for students to learn complex, high-level curriculum, they need to participate in interactive learning where the curriculum draws upon knowledge derived, in part, from students' personal experiences (ESS Framework, 1994, p. 23-25).

Nor is participatory access to the same curriculum an end unto itself. Consistent with another systemic reform principle, the ESS framework stresses setting high standards for all students — i.e. defining what students should learn — and measuring the impact of strategies used to reach these standards. Expanded learning opportunities

and evidence that all students have had success in learning is the heart of the ESS framework and systemic reform.

Methodology

Phase one began during the planning year for ESS schools, the 1991-92 school year. During the spring and early fall of 1992, we conducted one-day site visits to 23 of the 41 ESS schools. Time and resources determined the schools we visited. Therefore, we visited schools in each of the ten ESS districts but selected no more than three schools per district. In this phase, we selected schools that ensured us a variation in grade levels (elementary, middle, high school levels), size, diversity of student population, location (urban, suburban, rural neighborhoods) and experience in restructuring (length of time and level of efforts toward schoolwide change).

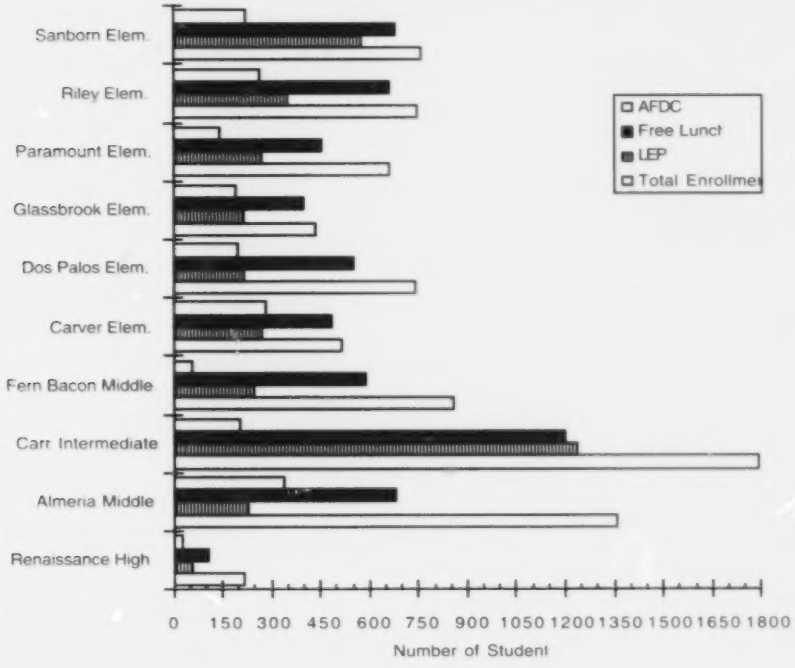
Two-person teams conducted semi-structured interviews and classroom observations at each site to learn about the context for restructuring, major components of each school's restructuring plans and their issues and challenges. The teams also gathered documents. Analysis of data from phase one examined common themes across sites in restructuring strategies, issues and challenges.

Data collected during this phase guided our inquiry during the second phase. We learned that schools reorganized students and teachers in similar ways; as important, many schools found meeting the needs of diverse students to be challenging. Therefore, in phase two we wanted to examine the issue of serving diverse student populations in more depth by narrowing our focus to a smaller number of schools, with more time at each school site. We selected ten schools (one from each of the ten ESS districts) to ensure variation in the range of language and geographic (urban, suburban, rural) contexts, elementary/secondary levels and whether or not schools received SB1274 funding. We also selected schools on the basis of how well the site could inform the issue of serving diverse students, especially LEP students, within restructuring efforts.

Of the ten in the sample, there are two rural, five suburban and three urban schools. They ranged from 200 to over 1,500 students and included one high school, three middle schools and six elementary schools. Limited English proficient (LEP) populations ranged from 16% to nearly 75% of each school's total population, with Spanish speakers comprising the majority of the LEP populations. Several schools had linguistically diverse student populations, including Spanish, Hmong, Farsi and Vietnamese. Figure 1 reflects

their demographic characteristics. For more information on the strategies and issues that each school undertook, please refer to the second volume of this report (*Volume II: Ten Profiles*) which contains case descriptions of each of the ten schools.

Figure 1: Demographic Characteristics



During the second phase, we conducted additional, three-day site visits to these schools — visiting four schools during the 1992-93 school year and six during the 1993-94 school year. At these times, we conducted more structured individual and focus group interviews and classroom observations.

To gain a broader perspective, in both phases we conducted individual and focus group interviews with key role groups: principals/administrators; teachers participating in restructuring; special population teachers and aides (e.g., special education, bilingual/ESL, Chapter 1, GATE, vocational education); student support staff (e.g., counselors, school nurses, community-based organization staff, community workers); district contacts; and students. Interview guides were tailored to each role group to ensure that information collected appropriately reflected each group's unique perceptions and experiences with restructuring. In addition, we included a student experience component where site visitors observed classroom activities and then interviewed teachers and selected students.

Following the visits, phone interviews were conducted with principals to update information and expand upon certain themes, such as standards and assessment, professional development and prevention issues. Table 1 shows the data collection schedule for our final sample of ten schools.

Table 1: Data Collection

School	One-Day Site Visit	Three-Day Site Visit	Follow-Up: Phone Interviews [PI] & Update Visit [UV]
Almeria Middle	April 1992	May 1993	June 1994: PI
Carr Intermediate	May 1992	August 1993	N/A
Carver Elementary	May 1992	February 1994	June 1994: PI
Dos Palos Elementary	April 1992	February 1994	June 1994: PI
Fern Bacon Middle	May 1992	February 1994	June 1994: PI
Glassbrook Elementary	N/A	March 1994	June 1994: PI
Paramount Elementary	April 1992	June 1994	June 1994: PI
Renaissance High	May 1992	May 1993	May 1994: PI
Riley Elementary	May 1992	May 1993	May 1994: 1 day UV June 1994: PI
Sanborn Elementary	September 1992	December 1993	June 1994: PI

In summary, our goal was not to study a statistically representative sample of ESS schools or, for that matter, schools representative of at risk students in California. Rather, we focused on a sample of schools that included a range of settings and relevant contexts. While one high school is included, the sample speaks best to the experiences of elementary and middle schools.

The Reform Context for this Study: An Evolving Landscape

During our three-year examination, the landscape of reform has changed substantially. When this study began in 1992, school-based restructuring, the process by which schools undergo fundamental change to improve teaching and learning, was the emergent reform movement in many states, including California. Today, three years later, the restructuring movement has become submerged under the umbrella of — if not eclipsed by — another national reform effort: standards or curriculum-driven, systemic reform efforts.[1] The passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act and other federal legislation in 1994 placed systemic reform in the center of the national education reform agenda. Although the Congressional leadership in

1 Newmann and William H. Clune. "When School Restructuring Meets Systemic Curriculum Reform." Brief to Policymakers, Summer 1992, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. Smith and O'Day, *Putting the Pieces Together: Systemic School Reform*. CPRE Policy Brief. Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1991.

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1995 has reopened the debate on the merits of systemic reform, many at the state and local level continue to move forward in carrying out this reform. This study offers insight into how school-based systemic reform is unfolding and the readiness of a small sample of California schools to assume this and other new reform demands coming down the policy pipeline.

California's Restructuring Efforts

Unlike other states, in California restructuring and curriculum-driven systemic reform coexisted as reform movements for over a decade. In fact, our study suggests that much of the groundwork gained through school-based restructuring efforts laid the foundation and impetus for systemic reform. Beginning with the state's School Improvement Program in the late 1970s and School-Based Coordination Program in the early 1980s, many of California's schools had long been rethinking teaching and learning, school organization and decentralized decision-making.

Fueling California's restructuring momentum were state-sponsored professional development networks. By the end of the 1980s, many of California's schools were participating in networks established, among other things, to help transform elementary, middle and high schools.[2] In 1991, ESS and its sister-initiative, the SB1274 program, created two new programs promoting school restructuring. The confluence and impact of these multiple restructuring initiatives were apparent even during our first round of visits to ESS schools; schools participating in ESS were already steeped in the rhetoric of restructuring, if not implementing activities based on some basic tenets of restructuring. Decentralized decision-making, integration of curriculum and instruction and the reconfiguration of teacher-student groupings were some of the most common restructuring activities during that first year (Izu, Guthrie and Carlos, 1993).

Some activities were influenced by earlier state reform initiatives, such as curriculum frameworks. In the early 1980s, California convened task forces to develop curriculum frameworks for specific subjects — math, science, English, language arts, history/social science, foreign language, fine arts, health and physical education.

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2 These networks were created to support the implementation of state task force recommendations: *Second to None: A Vision for the New California High School* (1992); *Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools* (1987); *It's Elementary!* (1992); *Here They Come! Ready or Not* (1992).

Still in place today, these frameworks are designed to standardize curriculum in each subject area and promote greater continuity between grade levels. In theory, these frameworks are supposed to lend coherence across subject matter areas by emphasizing common themes, such as highlighting complex thinking skills, depth of content and a multidisciplinary, multicultural perspective (Massel and Fuhrman, et al., 1994). They also promote a philosophy about what schools should emphasize, in addition to suggesting instructional strategies (e.g., team teaching and heterogeneous grouping) to enhance educational equity and expand professional opportunities for teachers. Although practitioners did not directly attribute many changes to the frameworks, many reforms were nonetheless consistent with principles embodied by the frameworks. Prior research has suggested that the impact of the curriculum frameworks on classroom instruction and curriculum has been minimal and uneven. (EEPA, 1990). Our study, however, points to instances where frameworks play a profound role in shaping school change efforts.

The curriculum frameworks' slow and somewhat superficial implementation is sometimes attributed to the slow evolution of the state's performance-based assessment system, the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS). CLAS was intended to provide more congruence between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy (CDE, 1994). This test was administered statewide in 1993-94 in grades 4, 8 and 10 in math, literature and writing. The hope was that this assessment would promote the widespread adoption of the frameworks, as well as encourage more effective teaching and learning practices. Currently, however, the future of a statewide performance-based assessment system is in question. During our last round of visits, schools were anticipating that this test would continue and, in some cases, were relying on its results to help evaluate their restructuring efforts. Other schools had not really considered how CLAS test results could help them.

National Reform Context

The federal landscape for reform has also shifted. With the passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act and Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (formerly ESEA), the federal government's reform agenda embraced many principles of California's curriculum-based systemic reform efforts. Drawing from states such as California, national policymakers hope to guide bottom-up reform by creating a coherent, systemwide change process to raise standards for student learning outcomes. Unlike previous national reforms which focused on policy levers that would influence educa-

tional inputs, such as compliance with mandates as the mechanism to improve schools, systemic reform focuses on educational outputs or — more precisely — curriculum content and performance standards which spell out what students should know and be able to do. In keeping with the philosophy of supporting bottom-up reform, as long as progress towards standards is demonstrated, the design of schools is left largely to those closest to students: teachers, parents and the local education community. At the state level, accountability systems and policies, from top levels of government on down, should be aligned to support the attainment and measurement of these standards (Smith and O'Day 1991, 1993).

For most of the country, this shift to a curriculum-based or systemic reform agenda is relatively new. As noted, California has already faced a decade-long struggle. This study allows practitioners and policymakers to view how a sample of California schools serve linguistically, economically and culturally diverse students, many of whom have the farthest to go in meeting standards. If systemic reform is to make a difference anywhere, it must, in many ways, demonstrate it has done so in these schools.

Creating Genuine Learning Opportunities For All Students

This study focused on restructuring schools serving students considered at risk of academic failure. Thus, a core question was "how to create genuine learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their needs, ability and background." Specifically, we were interested in the strategies schools employed to ensure that every child had access to an enriched core curriculum and the adjustment of their curriculum and instruction to ensure — not only exposure to but mastery of — curriculum content and skill competency. In this section we examine these strategies as well as the professional development activities that support these strategies.

Summary of Major Findings

Our major findings about school efforts and strategies to create learning opportunities for all students were as follows:

- **Schools relied upon three major strategies to provide all students a genuine opportunity to learn. These strategies were to:**

  1) ***create more equitable and responsive student-teacher configurations (i.e., grouping strategies) to meet the learning needs of all students.*** All schools pursued changes in how students and teachers were organized for a wide variety of purposes, such as changing classroom student composition to be more heterogeneous for more equitable learning among students with different ability levels or combining teacher class periods to facilitate team teaching between specialists and regular classroom teachers.

  2) ***enrich the curriculum and tailor instruction for all students.*** Most schools were upgrading subject matter areas, in some instances making them more rigorous and relevant to students' lives, backgrounds and culture, and/or emphasizing instructional approaches to promote comprehension, often using visual clues and hands-on, project-driven activities.

  3) ***build the knowledge, skills and capacity of school staff.*** Some schools pursued professional development in a coordinated, deliberate manner; others took what was readily available and/or utilized a random, one-shot approach.

- **Heterogeneous grouping is not always best and homogeneous grouping is not always inappropriate; overall, the best approach may be a combination of both grouping strategies.** Schools with student populations with diverse language needs

struggled for an appropriate balance between homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings to ensure that students were included in restructuring efforts but still received instruction appropriate to their language proficiency levels.

- **While each school's path to developing and teaching challenging curriculum differed, schools exhibited three patterns in the way they approach these changes: incremental, developmental and pervasive.** While many schools began restructuring through piecemeal experimentation with different curriculum and instructional strategies, over time some schools took a more developmental approach — a deliberate course of action that slowly introduced curriculum and instructional changes in one content area or in a certain grade level(s) with gradual expansion and refinement. Pervasive approaches — employing coordinated changes in teaching and learning at all grade levels and across several subject matter areas — were rare, but typically embraced a guiding set of principles and had a broad-based committee or decision-making structure.

- **Professional development plans for restructuring were more piecemeal than cohesive and dependent upon available resources for training.** Fragmented restructuring efforts were usually accompanied by piecemeal professional development activities. Conversely, a school that undertook comprehensive changes, usually had teacher training that had been similarly intensive and schoolwide. To a large extent, the ability of schools to focus on changing student learning was dependent upon their access to, and resources available for, training in new curricular and instructional approaches.

Organizational Strategies Used to Improve Learning For All Students

Overall, we found schools were experimenting with four major grouping and organizational strategies, often interrelated and used concurrently: (1) integrating categorical programs and grouping students heterogeneously — regardless of academic skill and/or language ability — to address issues of inclusion, equity and access; (2) grouping students homogeneously by ability and language level to provide better individualized instruction and curriculum; (3) combining classroom periods (e.g., block scheduling) to facilitate team teaching and an integrated, thematic curriculum; and (4) organizing students and teachers into smaller "schools within schools" to better meet students' affective needs.

Integrating Categorical Programs and Heterogeneous Grouping

Recently, the call for higher expectations for all students has led to more mainstreaming, integration of categorical programs and heterogeneous grouping. The goal is to have students, regardless of their skill level, language proficiency, disability or need, participate in the same enriched learning environment. Consistent with findings of other research (Olsen, et al., 1994), most schools adopt heterogeneous grouping as a way to minimize the time students requiring special support services are segregated from the regular classroom.

In most schools, however, heterogeneous grouping was used only for some subjects or classroom activities. For example, schools usually integrated limited English proficient (LEP) students with English speakers during certain activities that were not language-dependent (e.g., art, P.E., music). In other schools, students were mixed heterogeneously by skill and language proficiency across classrooms, but within classrooms, teachers used discretion to determine their own grouping strategies. To accommodate discrepancies in language levels and needs, some teachers employed complementary instructional strategies, such as hands-on, project-driven activities and altered curriculum to make it more relevant to the backgrounds and experiences of students. Cooperative learning and student pairings also afforded students mutual support when individualized teacher attention was unavailable and enabled students to assume different roles in a group setting.

Homogeneous Grouping

Although heterogeneous grouping was commonly cited as a method for ensuring equity and access, schools were quick to tout the advantages of homogeneous grouping for students at risk of academic failure. In fact, most schools we visited relied upon some form of homogeneous grouping during parts of the day. Several staff felt that instructing students in groups organized by skill and language ability gave students more confidence and encouraged them to take more risks academically.

Some teachers claimed that having homogeneous classrooms grouped by language ability helped develop a higher quality, more thoughtful curriculum and more individualized instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of students. Not surprisingly, these views are consistent with California's long-time push toward primary language instruction and bilingual education: to group

students homogeneously until they demonstrate a certain level of English proficiency. When LEP students were not in bilingual education classrooms, they were grouped homogeneously by language ability for certain subject matter areas with teachers trained to "shelter" the delivery of content (e.g., developing lesson plans that incorporate more visual cues and hands-on activities)."

One teacher explained the benefits of a classroom grouped by language ability:

"...We don't have kids falling through the cracks. And we don't have that anxiety that you have in the regular classroom about 'what am I going to do with such a range of kids?"

The percentage of time LEP students spent in homogeneous settings usually varied according to the language development model used, concentration of certain language students and diversity of languages. Staff, for the most part, believed that what worked best was creating opportunities for students to spend time in both mixed and non-mixed settings. For example, in one elementary school, LEP students were grouped heterogeneously with English speakers from 20 to 50% of the day. This time was viewed as critical for practicing English and encouraging greater socialization among students.

Students with disabilities were also grouped in homogeneous settings for parts of the day. Despite the trend toward mainstreaming or integrating students with disabilities in the "least restrictive environment" or regular classroom, we found schools relied upon a continuum of service delivery models from heterogeneous to homogeneous settings (e.g., push-in to pull-out tutorial assistance). Again, the degree of inclusion in regular classrooms depended on the concentration of students with disabilities, the types of disabilities represented and — perhaps most important — the regular classroom teacher.

To avoid tracking and excluding students (concerns sometimes associated with homogeneous grouping), schools tried to create a dynamic grouping structure flexible enough to accommodate differences in learning paces. To keep student assignments fluid, schools claimed they assessed students regularly with established criteria for exiting from compensatory and language development programs. However, when the staff in one school were asked how many students were actually reassigned, it was noted only a few students had actually moved out of the original placement groups.

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Grouping to Facilitate Team Teaching

Block scheduling, in which students are grouped for extended periods to facilitate a more integrated, in-depth delivery of subject matter, was used so that teachers who taught special education or bilingual classrooms could pair with regular classroom teachers. This is typically accomplished by collapsing several subject matter periods together so teachers can integrate thematic units and experiment with team teaching. Such block scheduling allowed teachers and specialists (special education, Chapter 1, bilingual) to work together in interdisciplinary teams, by both subject of expertise and categorical program.

Many schools experimented with teaming a regular classroom teacher with a Chapter 1 or special education teacher, speech therapist or bilingual instructor. Specialists involved in team teaching could then share those instructional strategies that work not only for certain students, but from which all students could benefit. School staff also claimed that this approach fostered greater self-esteem because students were not singled out and made to feel different.

Subdividing Schools to Create a More Nurturing Environment

Grouping was also seen as a preventive intervention: creating a more nurturing environment to address students' affective needs. By dividing schools into smaller units — sometimes referred to as families, houses or teams — stronger student-teacher relationships could develop. Not surprisingly, this approach was found at the middle and secondary level, reflecting California's grade-level reform efforts.[3] This type of organizational structure was also being used by two elementary schools. School staff reported that such grouping often allowed them to monitor behavioral problems before they became severe discipline issues.

Tensions and Solutions Relating to Grouping and Organizational Strategies

Since most schools in our sample were simultaneously implementing a combination of grouping configurations, logistical conflicts were common. Many conflicts stemmed from a desire to create a

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3 This subdivision strategy stems from recommendations in the California middle grade task force report, *Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools.*

universal, all-inclusive learning environment while remaining responsive to individual needs of students.

Related studies revealed similar tensions. As stated in California Tomorrow's study of restructuring schools: "There has been a radical swing away from programs, policies and reforms aimed at the particular needs of special groups of students and towards a dominant reform paradigm — which uses the words 'all' children, heterogeneity and integration, but which appears then to eclipse specific targeted supports (1994, p. 36)."

While the discussion of inclusiveness may reflect a radical swing in one direction, in practice we found schools still struggling with how to de-track and integrate their categorical program service delivery models to eliminate pull-outs or self-contained classrooms that segregated students. Of those schools the farthest along, none was exclusively committed to heterogeneous grouping as a primary means of ensuring educational equity. In fact, schools in the midst of experimentation with heterogeneous grouping were quickly realizing the inadequacy of this strategy without a set of concomitant instructional and organizational changes. And, for those schools farthest along in implementing heterogeneous grouping, staff were concerned that even inservice on instructional strategies for LEP students and students with disabilities was not extensive enough, nor the only strategy necessary for meeting the needs of every child in a mixed-ability classroom.

This array of concerns has already led schools to pursue multiple and varied grouping practices to meet a wider range of needs and concerns. As such, the major tension we observed stemmed from schools trying to balance grouping strategies promoting equity in learning the core curriculum (e.g., heterogeneous grouping, mainstreaming) with those designed to be most developmentally and individually appropriate (e.g., homogeneous groups tailored to the targeted needs of students).

LEP students: Should they be grouped together or spread across the school?

Generally, those schools struggling for an appropriate balance between heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings had large student populations with diverse language needs. While some staff reported that a heterogeneous setting was best for students, others argued that self-contained or separate primary language instruction classes served LEP students better than heterogeneously grouped,

sheltered-English classrooms. Others, however, stated that LEP students in separate, primary language instruction classrooms did not receive the high-quality curriculum of their English-speaking peers.

In other instances, staff reported the converse. In two elementary schools, Spanish-speaking children in native language bilingual programs were performing better academically than their English-speaking peers. One school attributed this to the high quality of instruction associated with the bilingual model — intensive teacher training and emphasis on language comprehension. Staff in another school suggested that English-speaking students did worse academically, because they came from more "troubled," second- and third-generation families as compared to the "hard-working," first-generation immigrant students in bilingual classrooms.

One important impact of restructuring was that it forced schools and districts to rethink their priorities and philosophies surrounding grouping and the needs of LEP students. In two schools, a similar conflict arose over whether to subdivide the school into smaller, heterogeneously grouped families with mixed language ability classrooms, or opt for a homogeneous family structure that houses all LEP students in one place so they could preserve the primary language instruction model. In both instances, schools momentarily adopted a heterogeneously grouped family structure, but soon reverted to a homogeneous one because they worried that students' language needs were not being met appropriately.

Students with disabilities: Do inclusion and integration of services result in less individualized attention?

The same question of balance arose when planning services for special education students. Students traditionally placed in self-contained classrooms for most of the day are now increasingly mainstreamed into the regular classroom.[4] As with LEP students, however, this type of dispersion of students was sometimes viewed as causing more harm than good.

In one middle school, special education teachers were assigned to one cluster where they were required to teach regular education and LEP students, while special education students were spread throughout all the clusters. Because of a lack of time and uncoordi-

4 This is in part due to IDEA requirements to place such students in the "least restrictive environment."

nated schedules, special education teachers felt they were unable to serve, assess and develop individualized educational plans for other special education students in other clusters. Yet, teachers in other clusters did not want these students to be "pulled out" or provided in-class support because they viewed it as disruptive. Furthermore, the school had implemented a schoolwide developmental learning model — a model which emphasizes cooperative learning and individual learning centers, as well as the use of manipulatives. Teachers who had participated in this training found it to be adequate in addressing the needs of special education students.

In contrast, one elementary school found a model that worked well by using cooperative learning (e.g., the assignment of special education students to peer partners), coupled with smaller class size. At each grade level, one class was designated to serve 5-6 students with severe learning delays. These students were cooperatively grouped with about 15 non-special education students. A complementary strategy was to institute team teaching among regular and special education teachers. Students with severe delays in learning, however, often still required one-on-one, in-class support and were pulled out for parts of the day. One group of teachers believed these students could concentrate better in quieter environments.

Finding Equilibrium Among Grouping Strategies

One elementary school used this two-pronged approach for resolving tensions surrounding grouping strategies:

- **In the morning, students received thematic instruction in reading, language arts and social science in developmentally appropriate groups, based on language proficiencies, to maximize learning for students at different stages of language skill development.**
- **In the afternoon, primary and upper grade students (including LEP and special education students) were organized into multi-age, heterogeneous groups for instruction in science, art, music, computers, drama and/or career/self-awareness. These groups, together for at least one year, rotated through these subjects monthly.**

Curriculum Enrichment and Integration

Another common set of strategies schools used to address opportunity to learn issues focused on changing curriculum and instruction. Most schools were making the curriculum more responsive and relevant to the lives of all students, as well as capitalizing on team teaching for integrating subject matter and curriculum across categorical programs serving different student populations.

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Curriculum content was being upgraded across subject matter areas to incorporate more critical-thinking skills, usually through literature and language arts units. A few schools infused their curriculum with a more multicultural perspective. Student participation in the construction of curriculum proved effective not only for drawing out different cultural perspectives, but also for encouraging student reflection on their personal experiences.

Affirming Students' Personal Experiences through the Curriculum

The high school in our sample explained that curriculum was a "vehicle for supporting" students. For example, one integrated thematic unit on immigration required students to interview their families about personal experiences as newcomers in this country. Both teachers and students reported that the curriculum was more meaning-centered, particularly by allowing students to choose subjects within a theme that were culturally relevant and that drew from their family and personal experiences. As one teacher explained: "We now know that whatever curriculum we use, we'll need kids to make a personal connection with it."

Concurrently, almost all schools we saw were experimenting with instructional approaches that emphasized manipulatives, cooperative learning and project-driven activities, providing students who had varying learning styles multiple opportunities to participate in learning. The integration of technology and multimedia was also popular; several schools had computer labs accessible to all classes.

While each school's path to changing curriculum and instruction was different, schools exhibited three patterns in the way they approached these changes:

- **Incremental**. For the most part, schools were either engaged in or had started the process of restructuring through an incremental, piecemeal experimentation with different approaches to curriculum and instruction. These were often isolated experiments undertaken by individuals or a small group of teachers.

- **Developmental**. Schools engaged in this type of curriculum enrichment and integration followed a more deliberate course of action, introducing different curriculum and associated instructional techniques one step at a time. Schools who pursued a developmental approach usually started by focusing on one curricular area (e.g., language arts, math or science) at one grade level, upgrading the curriculum by infusing it with more critical-thinking skills, technology, students' own personal experiences, etc. Typically, this approach was piloted, then refined and adapted for other teams of teachers or expanded to

include other subject matter areas. Integrated thematic units were often introduced slowly, schoolwide, through this developmental approach. Critical to this approach was a committed cadre of lead teachers (mentor teachers) who were willing to train, model and follow through with other teachers.

- **Pervasive**. A very few schools in our sample took a pervasive, systemic approach to changing curriculum and instructional practices. For those schools that were more pervasive in their efforts (i.e., changing approaches to teaching and learning at all grade levels across all subject matter areas), this process usually required an initial comprehensive revision of school curriculum. Schools attempting this type of revision usually had a guiding set of principles, such as those articulated in the state's curriculum frameworks. The common vehicle for such schoolwide revision and implementation was the formation of a broad-based committee.

A Developmental Approach to Upgrading the Curriculum

In one middle school, the developmental route was seen as critical to the successful implementation of a schoolwide writing and critical-thinking skills curriculum, based on the Socratic method, called Philosophy for Children. The school's restructuring coordinator described the different stages involved in this five-year process of implementation:

- **Stage 1: Teams learn to meet and work together, develop group procedures (i.e., how to conduct parent conferences, handle discipline problems) and begin to integrate writing across the curriculum (but, for the most part, still teach within their content area);**

- **Stage 2: With structure well established, teams develop thematic units, begin to dissolve content areas, increase writing in all classes and, at the end of this stage, begin to evaluate their work and develop more formal curriculum units with built-in assessments; and**

- **Stage 3: Teams continue to refine working together, exercise creativity, explore new possibilities and focus on standards development, self-evaluation and assessment. Sharing with other teams occurs and some leave to serve leadership roles in newly formed teams.**

While many schools had begun restructuring through incremental experimentation, most schools had slowly evolved toward a more developmental approach to curricular and instructional changes. Several school staff, especially administrators, noted that change takes time and must be carefully planned if all teachers are to buy in. Pervasive changes to curriculum were more likely in "start-up schools" or in small schools where decision-making involves fewer people. However, even schools that were more pervasive in their efforts went through developmental phases.

Tensions In Curriculum Enrichment and Integration

Many California restructuring initiatives in recent years have tried to get schools to focus on change efforts that improve student learning. To a large extent, however, the ability of schools to focus on changing student learning was dependent upon their access to new curricular and instructional approaches and the availability of resources for the necessary training. Perhaps most important was the availability of pre-existing curriculum workshops that train teachers on the delivery of curriculum in a certain area. While some teachers were engaged in developing their own curricular materials, by far the easiest approach that yielded almost immediate results was the adoption of a pre-existing curriculum package through intensive training workshops (e.g., Reading Recovery, Math Renaissance). How well these trainings led to schoolwide changes also rested on whether all teachers participated and/or whether the lead teachers sent to the workshop actually were provided enough skills and had the time and motivation to train other teachers in the school. In almost all cases that was the goal, but execution and follow-through were more the exception than the rule.

Unevenness in curriculum reform was also due to the different developmental stages of teams of teachers within a school. Reasons for this included the frequency of teacher turnover and grade reassignments in schools, the availability for and motivation to find time for planning, their ability to block schedule class periods, their level of conviction about the merits of a new model and their compatibility in working together as a team. External factors also played a role: many schools mentioned that district policies on substitutes and number of days allowed for planning did not provide the latitude needed for reforms to take hold.

One school farthest along in developing a schoolwide curriculum based upon the state frameworks faced another set of issues. Because enrollment demographics made it difficult to have single-grade teams, teachers in multi-grade teams found it difficult to create curriculum that had both the depth in content and was still consistent with the themes found in the state frameworks. Another concern raised by a few schools was that only so much cross-curricular integration could occur without sacrificing the building blocks of the core curriculum (e.g., over-emphasis on problem-solving versus computation skills in mathematics).

A related issue concerns whether to pursue breadth or depth when changing curriculum. A few schools engaged in pervasive efforts

tackled as many enrichment and integration strategies as possible across the entire school. Other schools engaged in pervasive efforts began like schools that employed a developmental approach; i.e., they strove to be more strategic, focusing on one or two subject matter areas or concepts at a time. Most schools that chose to develop a certain subject matter area usually focused on literacy — reading or writing — and then branched to corresponding areas, such as math or science. In addition to reworking content, curriculum was described as being more hands-on and infusing critical-thinking activities.

Schools that were more successful in taking on or moving toward a more pervasive approach to upgrading the curriculum (i.e., their efforts had both depth and breadth) had already learned to work together on restructuring. They also tended to use some overarching guidelines usually set by the district or the state curriculum framework. Schools that attempted a complete curriculum overhaul and attempted to train all teachers with new instructional strategies without this foundation were more likely to succumb to superficial or uneven implementation issues because sufficient time had not been dedicated to convincing affected staff of the need for these changes.

Another tension concerned the degree to which curricular and instructional changes were inclusive of bilingual education classrooms or those smaller organizational student-teacher units for schools with predominantly LEP students and/or special education students. School staff sometimes felt that these students and their teachers were isolated from curricular and instructional changes. For LEP and special education students in the regular classroom, schools sometimes modified the instruction and delivery of material to accommodate different learning styles (e.g., manipulatives and cooperative grouping strategies).

Professional Development

Staff development is increasingly viewed as the primary vehicle for systemic reform. In schools we visited, staff development indeed was integral to restructuring. The focus, design and decision-making surrounding the choice of professional development activities usually varied by school.

Because these schools had all engaged in a planning process, professional development activities were supposed to be tied to a school's vision. Our general impression, however, was that professional development plans were more piecemeal than cohesive. In instances where professional opportunities were most cohesive, site-based

councils were established that had often made tough choices about whether opportunities available would actually further their school's vision and overall goals. For example, one elementary school with a strong vision for staff development refused offers for training that were inconsistent with the school's philosophy (e.g., did not include a multicultural perspective and did not have materials translated into Spanish). Instead, because their philosophy embraced such ideas as developing the "whole child and valuing diversity of talent," school staff chose schoolwide training in Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences.

In other schools, decisions about professional development strategies were left to smaller organizational units (e.g., families or grade-level teams) which selected activities based upon their own thematic interests and planning. Many teachers expressed satisfaction with having greater freedom to select professional development opportunities. School administrators also mentioned the benefits of having teachers pursue a wide variety of new curriculum and instructional approaches. However, the down side of such experimentation was that selected activities were not always congruent across different organizational units, though supposedly related to a school's mission and goals. Some schools, meanwhile, minimized fragmentation by instituting schoolwide staff development requiring full teacher participation.

Also influencing the direction of a school's professional development were the resources available — including funds, technical assistance from public agencies and in-kind support from outside organizations, such as institutions of higher education. By far the most common funding sources for staff development were state (e.g., SIP, SB1274) and federal (e.g., Chapter 1, Chapter 2) categorical programs. In a few especially entrepreneurial schools, professional development was supplemented by private funds. One school, for example, received free training from the Covey Institute on their "Seven Highly Effective Habits of Successful People" model. Some schools combined funding to pursue a single set of professional development strategies, such as integrating technology into the curriculum schoolwide or concentrating funds to train two teachers in a promising literacy model to be piloted and eventually expanded.

Local institutions of higher education were also viewed as invaluable to a school's professional development success. One middle school, for example, had an on-site Professional Development School established by California State University at Fullerton. This

partnership provided additional student teacher support, as well as allowing teachers from the school to attend inservice training by the university. Some teachers were also invited to be instructors at the university.

Finally, a school's demographic reality often influenced the thrust of professional development activities. Schools recognized that implementing heterogeneous grouping strategies aimed at providing all students access to the curriculum meant that regular classroom teachers needed to be better equipped with a repertoire of skills and knowledge. Consequently, all schools, to some degree, had offered training on language and cultural instructional strategies. Despite such efforts, some school staff believed this training was not consistently intense. For schools that mainstreamed special education students, more school staff wanted specialized training.

Tensions in Professional Development

Three years ago, during the first phase, most schools in our sample had focused their restructuring on developing governance structures (Izu, Guthrie and Carlos, 1993). While research indicates that many decentralized decision-making efforts can get caught in trivial decision-making, we found that schools used this planning period to build a common vision and more coherent strategy for change. The frustration of "tinkering toward utopia" without a more purposeful plan was already apparent in some schools in our sample. By the second phase of our study, schools' professional development focus had already experienced two shifts. First, it shifted from learning how to work together in decision-making to experimenting with restructuring strategies.

The second shift was from random experimentation to a more deliberate, inquiry-driven pursuit. Typically, this shift coincided with greater opportunities for school staff to engage in in-depth, critical reflection about what was working and why. (For example, see discussion of the Protocol, a self-study process, and California's Program Quality Review process in the subsequent section on school reflection and self-evaluation.) Such schools had begun to recognize that by being increasingly strategic in where they concentrated their efforts, they would have a much stronger, more permanent effect. The dilemma, of course, was on finding consensus about those key areas of focus. This was difficult when teachers, who had initially been given more free reign to be innovative, were suddenly asked to consolidate their efforts and choose a singular, schoolwide course for change.

Consistent with other research, time continued as an obstacle to some schools' efforts for more intensive professional development. Most schools we saw had eight days or less for inservice.[5] Finding enough time for planning, reflecting and modeling for other teachers remained a struggle.

Finally, another tension in staff development concerned the intensity of training in strategies for teaching LEP, special education and students with different learning styles. While many schools emphasized high standards for all students, it was not always clear whether teachers felt they had received adequate training to ensure that all students, regardless of language, disabilities or learning styles, would indeed master a high level of performance.

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5 California state code provides for eight pupil-free days. However, it is up to districts to determine how many days each school is allowed.

Defining And Measuring Success In Meaningful Ways

Recent restructuring initiatives have begun to focus more on how to define and measure student success and less on how to organize school decision-making, programs and professional opportunities for teachers (Conley, 1993). Advocates of systemic reform have also encouraged schools to set a more coherent course for change by being clear about what students should know and be able to do (Smith and O'Day, 1993). Likewise, the trend toward adopting more authentic methods of assessment has stressed measuring student performance so teachers gain more meaningful information about the effectiveness of their curriculum and instructional strategies (CAC, 1993; Conley, 1993).

Discussion surrounding assessment has mostly focused on how well teachers measure each student's success at the classroom level. Equally important, but receiving less attention, is how well schools measure their overall organizational success and the relative success of different groups of students. Coherent, systemic reform certainly needs to be student-focused, but it also requires established organizational processes that build a school's capacity to monitor the effectiveness of its programs and practices.

Of note, while the development of standards — i.e., the definitions of what students should know and be able to do — is tightly coupled with curriculum development in discussions of systemic reform, a major finding in our work is the fledgling status of standards development and rather loose coupling with current changes in curriculum and instruction. Similarly, because many schools are just beginning to develop standards, the actual challenges and implementation tensions posed by these efforts for diverse student populations are less clear, as they are just beginning to emerge.

In this section, then, we look at how far along schools were in answering the question, "How do schools define success, measure it and use that information to shape their restructuring efforts?" First, we focus on how student success is defined and measured. Near the end, we focus on organizational change. Also, in keeping with the concept of systemic reform, we examined existing district and state accountability processes that have begun to equip schools with tools and processes to evaluate their own efforts. As compared to the previous chapter, the shift in our discussion towards more general issues in systemic reform (rather than specific implications of restructuring for special need student populations) reflects the current status of standards and assessment development in most schools.

Summary of Major Findings on Standards and Assessment

Our research provides insight into schools' readiness to jump into the standards and assessment development process. Major findings about the status of these developments in schools include:

- **We found clear support and a readiness to develop challenging, common standards for students among the schools and districts we visited; however, schools are struggling to define and develop standards while they prioritize their implementation relative to other restructuring outcomes, district competencies and accountability requirements. Considerable confusion remains about what standards mean and how they relate to existing goals and outcomes for students**. In particular, in addition to academic achievement, schools often articulated definitions of student success that reflected larger societal goals or broader, more holistic definitions that include specific values or affective expectations for students. For schools in the process of or about to develop a standards-driven restructuring effort, questions remain about whether and which "standards" take precedence, and how to integrate them with the array of other measures for which schools are accountable. Linking accountability requirements at different levels is important to maintain momentum and staff enthusiasm for comprehensive reform.

- **Standards development is not linear; it is iterative, often building from multiple points of entry**. Similar to curriculum development, we find the strategy for developing standards to be far from linear and coherent. Instead, it is dynamic and subject to the same patterns described under curriculum development (i.e., incremental, developmental and pervasive) and influenced by such factors as the resources available, district priorities and the concurrent development of assessments.

- **Districts and strategies that empower teachers tended to influence and support the development of *schoolwide* standards aligned to the state curriculum frameworks**. Schools that had begun to develop schoolwide standards aligned to state frameworks shared three characteristics: (1) district support for (and alignment of district priorities with) standards development in specific content areas, (2) a structure and process for schoolwide decision-making and communication and (3) individual teachers' involvement in professional networks and development opportunities.

- **While schools embrace the notion that standards should apply to all students, in practice, differential criteria may be used**. While all schools agree that high expectations for every student are integral to improved outcomes, in practice, different standards and criteria are used for certain categories of special needs students in some schools. This is particularly true when the appropriate classroom support and resources are not available to accommodate different needs students have in trying to reach the same standards.

- **Schools have multiple measures of student learning and outcomes; however, frequently these measures were neither well integrated nor used by schools to assess how well students were doing with the new practices being tried**. Schools rarely used the majority of externally required assessments or even disaggregated their data to analyze results for different sub-groups of students.

- **Schools and districts often agree on the goals for students, but disagree on their measurement**. Individual student growth — as opposed to relative growth (i.e., compared to other students) — is often valued most by classroom teachers. In contrast, districts favored standardized measures to obtain the comparative data on which to base resource decisions.

- **The farther along schools were in their restructuring process, the more they wanted to know which schoolwide efforts and combination of strategies were actually making a difference and for whom. But most schools lack the tools and skills to do so**. Schools that had reached a certain point in the development of their effort — where strategies had been implemented and were being refined — became more interested in evaluating their efforts than schools still defining their approach. But schools often did not have the tools to analyze data, e.g., a student information system that would allow easy tracking of large numbers of individuals or groups of students over time, or easy disaggregation of data.

Defining Student Success: Standards Development

High expectations and common standards about what students should know and be able to do are the building blocks of systemic reform (Smith and O'Day, 1993). Yet, despite state and national education reform policies which propose that setting such high standards is a powerful lever for systemwide improvement, little is

yet known about how standards actually transform schools. In California, much thought and many resources have been devoted to developing an infrastructure for supporting standards-driven systemic reform through aligned curriculum frameworks, performance-based assessments and professional development networks. Yet, even in this state context, we find most schools are just beginning to operationalize content standards on a schoolwide basis. Apart from the time that change — especially "second-order" (Cuban, 1988) or fundamental change — takes, our study suggests several other factors that contribute to schools' struggle and progress with standards and assessment: the timing of the standards development movement, plus the lack of consensus on the definition of standards.

Timing of the Standards Development Movement

Establishing challenging, common standards about what students should know and be able to do is typically viewed as a key *first* step in systemic reform. California is one of the few states that began this process nearly a decade ago with the development of statewide curriculum frameworks, subject matter projects and the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS). From these, broad content and performance standards for California students can be inferred. However, we found that at the school, and especially classroom, level the role of the frameworks to provide content standards was not always clear to practitioners; also, how the frameworks were used could vary across classrooms. For most schools, the student skills and abilities embedded in CLAS were just beginning to be realized when the test was first administered in Spring, 1993. For most teachers then, the call for "content and performance standards" was still an abstraction, even if their school or district had begun the process of aligning curriculum to the frameworks and/or CLAS. In short, from a school or practitioner perspective, the move toward challenging standards for all students came long after most schools began restructuring.

Consensus on Definitions and Types of Standards

Standards can take different forms and there is still considerable confusion about what standards mean and how they relate to existing goals and outcomes. Specifically, what are the definitions and distinctions between types of standards, outcomes, benchmarks, competencies, curriculum frameworks, etc.? In reality, standards cannot be developed in isolation from an already dynamic change process whose direction is influenced by an array of expectations, goals and accountability requirements. All schools in our study already had in place a labyrinth of academic-related objectives, including district

benchmarks, grade-level expectations and competencies for transitions between schools, between school and work, as well as standards relating to students' behavior, attitude and ethics. District and state accountability requirements added another layer of complexity.

For those few schools already developing or about to develop a standards-driven restructuring effort, questions still remained about whether and which of these "standards" took precedence, and/or how to integrate them with other measures for which schools were accountable.

More pointedly, can some form of what schools already follow count as a standard according to advocates of systemic reform? Our review of the expectations and goals that already guided schools in their restructuring suggests that definitions of success varied according to: (1) degree of specificity and (2) focus.

Broad Learning Outcomes For Students

Long before the movement toward content and performance standards gained momentum, many schools we visited had established broad learning outcomes for students not directly tied to specific content areas. A good example of these outcomes is this middle school's set of broad exit outcomes for its students:

- **Intrinsically motivated learners**
- **Possibility thinkers**
- **Active community contributors**
- **Versatile technology utilizers**
- **Accomplished communicators**

These outcomes are part of the overall mission that guides the school's restructuring efforts. Yet, how these kinds of outcomes are related to content and performance standards were major questions for many schools we visited.

We found that the specificity of restructuring outcomes relating to student achievement tended to be fairly broad. For example, most schools had a set of objectives or vision statements, such as "All students will be active participants in their own learning," or "Students will be improved communicators and powerful thinkers," or "Students will be responsible citizens." Less frequent were definitions of student success that focused on what students should know or be able to do within important content areas. Typically, this level of specificity was present in district grade-level competencies or grade-level subject matter assessment instruments, such as writing rubrics. Of note, in all ten schools the definitions and standards developed were meant to apply to all students.

Second, the focus of these definitions of success was not always academically-oriented. In particular, the tendency was for schools to pursue broad restructuring goals that emphasized specific values or

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affective expectations for students. Most schools articulated a definition of success that encompassed affective outcomes, relating to student attitude and behavioral characteristics. For example, one middle school, in addition to performance standards, deliberately defined standards in behavioral development, such as "self-directed learner," "quality producer," "collaborative worker" and "community contributor."

In some schools, such standards were considered more important than academic outcomes. Some defined a successful student in more holistic terms, placing an emphasis on affective dimensions such as a student's academic confidence or self-esteem, motivation to learn, persistence in staying in school and behaviors deemed important to student learning (e.g., cooperativeness, respect for diversity and non-violence). This is not surprising given that teachers have been largely involved in articulating what should be central to student learning. In the eyes of those closest to the classroom, it makes sense that a stable, safe learning environment, as well as student behaviors that support such a climate, are a prerequisite to higher academic achievement. Such an atmosphere is not only important to teachers. According to our interviews, safe school environments are highly valued by students and cited as one reason students enjoy attending one school over another. In short, schools are articulating a standard of student success that reflects larger societal goals. Concerns of the public at large, such as drugs, violence and gun control, are now also the concern of those in school. Skills which promote civic order and safety are not just seen as conducive to learning; they are critical to survival (Berliner and Linquanti, 1994).

While these schools paid special attention to behavioral skills that emphasize cooperation and respect in order to better facilitate learning, these skills are also exactly those employers have identified as necessary for success (e.g., Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)). Efforts of one high school in our sample to align their curriculum with the goals and outcomes of the larger community is a good example of the value often placed on non-academic behaviors within the workplace. Staff learned from a survey of employers that the qualities most desired in employees were behavioral in nature (e.g., responsibility, reliability, cooperation and the ability to communicate effectively), and, thus, in preparing students for the world outside the classroom, have tried to focus on approaches that address these very behaviors (i.e., emphasizing, among other strategies, cooperative group work and oral presentations).

Approaches to Developing Standards

In our study, we found the process and strategy for developing standards was far from linear — and often began through experiments with efforts to design more authentic assessments (discussed in a subsequent section). School approaches to developing standards followed the same three patterns that characterized curriculum development (i.e., incremental, developmental and pervasive approaches). Table 2 contains information about the development of student standards, goals and expectations in each of the ten schools. In most of the schools we visited, the development of standards occurred in isolated "pockets" of the school — i.e., at a particular grade level or in one or two content areas — rather than a pervasive approach where a schoolwide development effort in many content and performance areas was undertaken. This was true even in the single example of a "start-up" school (i.e., a school that began restructuring with a fresh start, including staff hired specifically to begin that school).

Like the incremental approach to curriculum development in many schools, individual classrooms, particular grade levels or organizational sub-units (such as families or interdisciplinary teams) developed behavior standards or set content standards in a certain subject. These experiments, however, tended to be isolated and piecemeal.

In other schools, a more developmental approach was taken. Following experiments or efforts to develop standards in a particular area or grade level, the effort was refined and gradually expanded to other content areas or grade levels. Though the scope or breadth of the effort (i.e., number of content areas covered) might be limited to one or two subjects, these schools followed a more deliberate and planned course. Moreover, the effort tended to span several, not just a single grade level or organizational sub-unit.

A pervasive, systemic approach to standards development (i.e., developed on a schoolwide basis) was uncommon; we suspect this is largely due to the time and resources necessary to reach consensus on specific standards within a school-community and the training for the corresponding curricular changes. For those schools that were more pervasive in their development of standards, efforts were more likely to be aligned to state curriculum frameworks.

Table 2: Status of Standards Development: Student Outcomes, Expectations and Standards	
Elementary **Suburban S. California**	• Districtwide standards contained in "16 Expectations" for student achievement in mathematics and language arts, as well as site organizational effectiveness.
Elementary **Rural C. California**	• District has no common standards for student success but school board advocating. • Grade-level teams develop own expectancies from district curricular frameworks and skills needed for CLAS for K-4. • Certain grade levels are developing reading and writing rubrics.
Elementary **Urban N. California**	• All teachers use state frameworks to develop curriculum and learning standards. • Beyond district-designed writing rubric based on standards per grade level, have developed own writing rubric which has been altered for LEP students. • In creating math centers, developed math rubric aligned with CLAS math rating.
Elementary **Suburban S. California**	• District "expectancies" are based upon state curriculum frameworks and are supposed to guide classroom lesson planning. • Developing common outcomes for students in both academic and affective domains.
Elementary **Urban S. California**	• District content and outcomes standards based on district curriculum is being developed with exit standards for 5th, 8th and 10th grade planned. • School plans to develop outcome standards/benchmarks for 5th graders based on district content standards and goals aligned with state frameworks and CLAS. • Schoolwide developmental, rubric-based (not grade-level-based) report card used. • Well-developed rubric for writing skill development used and scored schoolwide and articulated between levels.
Elementary **Rural N. California**	• State curriculum frameworks used to develop curriculum and learning standards. • Explicit and standardized exit criteria for language development stages. • *Lifelab* science project has standards and assessment tools linked across grades.
Middle **Suburban S. California**	• Developing schoolwide performance standards in reading, listening/speaking, writing, social studies, science, PE and performing arts. • Math performance levels being piloted schoolwide include "accomplished, capable, developing, beginning and emergent" (content of each rubric varies by grade). • Drafting behavior outcome standards for "self-directed learner, quality producer, collaborative worker, community contributor." • "Rules to Live By" and citizenship rubric for student behavior schoolwide. • Students have input in development of all standards.
Middle **Suburban S. California**	• No uniform definition of student success. Success defined in terms of heuristic indicators, such as student behavior, self-esteem and attitude.
Middle **Urban N. California**	• Developing health standards that will be tied to state curriculum frameworks with appropriate performance and other assessments developed. • Schoolwide behavior standard for entry and continuation based on citizenship grade of C or better. Standards and criteria for citizenship defined in schoolwide behavior code, as well as expectations of houses and individual teachers. • In some classrooms and/or houses, effort to align classroom curriculum and integrated thematic units with curriculum frameworks; in particular, math curriculum is well aligned.
High **Suburban C. California**	• District curriculum guides used to develop curriculum; effort to align integrated thematic units to state history/social studies frameworks. • Effort to align curriculum and instruction with workplace standards set by local business community across teams. • Schoolwide standards in attendance and citizenship/student behavior using a range of levels.

Factors Influencing Standards Development

The development of content and performance standards in schools was heavily influenced by available resources, in part, because of the time it takes to develop such standards. Resources (e.g., private and categorical money available for curriculum/standards development projects), rather than a restructuring plan that linked standards to the development of curriculum and assessment strategies, often drove the development of standards in schools. For example, in a middle school we visited, standards on health education being developed were tied to state curriculum frameworks — part of a larger project funded by a private foundation to infuse health issues into instructional practices and assessment procedures.

But schools developing schoolwide standards aligned to the frameworks were influenced by three factors: (1) district priorities and support; (2) a structure and process for schoolwide decision-making and communication; and (3) teacher involvement in professional networks and development opportunities.

Districts played a significant role in developing standards and determining which standards to implement. Curriculum development committees that articulated grade-level competencies or district expectancies, for example, could set the standards that schools deemed important. Typically, district standards in specific subject matter areas or exit criteria for transitions between schools and between school and work influenced school efforts — not only by setting particular standards but by involving teachers in developing exit criteria and content standards. Also, these experiences could generate interest and understanding about standards which teachers carried to school. Finally, if districts' curriculum and standards were aligned tightly to state curriculum frameworks or CLAS, school standards were then indirectly influenced by these state efforts.

Schools that had begun to develop schoolwide standards aligned to state frameworks tended to institute site-based management processes, or at least, strong mechanisms for schoolwide decision-making. We found building schoolwide consensus around specific standards takes time; understanding and buy-in are necessary to ensure implementation. Site-based management processes could facilitate the development of standards by encouraging greater interaction among teachers, facilitating consensus and communication of standards across classrooms and/or increasing participation in the process.

Finally, schools with teachers who had participated in district or state curriculum and standards development projects could support the development of aligned school standards by encouraging and assisting colleagues to implement them at the classroom level. We also found that teachers who were active in professional organizations or networks which emphasized curriculum frameworks were highly influential. For example, in one school with interdisciplinary teams, a teacher who had participated in reviewing the social studies curriculum framework at the state and district levels was instrumental in getting teams to focus on whether and how their integrated thematic units reflected the framework. Districts also supported school efforts by providing the release time for teachers to participate in these opportunities or by offering workshops to help increase staff knowledge and skills in these areas.

Rather than beginning their restructuring efforts with the development of standards, several schools developed standards later (i.e., after beginning restructuring activities such as families or experiments with authentic assessments and/or development of rubrics). This is consistent with research that suggests schools can begin developing instructionally sound assessments from several entry points, rather than a single one (CAC, 1993), and the stance taken by the New Standards Project (a coalition of 18 states and five school districts) that content standards are essentially a by-product of the development of performance-based assessments (CPRE, 1993). We also found evidence that schools can gain interest in and develop standards from other entry points. Experience in developing writing rubrics and performance-based report cards are just two examples of entry points that have led schools to a closer look at content standards.

There is also evidence that a certain level of school readiness or development is necessary before standards begin to make sense to school communities. In some schools, the decision to develop standards later is a reflection of school priorities and/or a conscious decision about the stage of development or readiness of staff. For example, in several schools where violence or the physical and emotional needs of students were great, establishing a stable, safe learning environment and meeting the non-academic needs of students took precedence over the development of standards. In another school we visited with a new, more diverse student population, the principal purposefully delayed the development of standards because she felt it was more important to build teacher knowledge and confidence about what can work for diverse groups of students than to dive into setting specific standards.

Differential Standards and Equity

We found that while most school practitioners subscribe to a single set of standards for students, in practice, differential standards or criteria are sometimes used for certain groups of students. For example, in several schools where special education students are mainstreamed into regular classrooms, we found that they did the same work as other students but were held to a standard that used student effort as the major criterion. Language minority students with low levels of English proficiency who were mainstreamed into regular classrooms often faced a similar situation. For example, student effort or use of English — not content knowledge — was the standard by which those students' progress was assessed.

Consistent with Howard's (1993) work and other research (Olsen, et al., 1994) on promoting successful learning for minority (including language minority) students in public school systems, changing teacher beliefs and demonstrating to classroom teachers how to meet those standards is critical to consistent implementation. That specific standards can be mastered by every student must be demonstrated to teachers; otherwise, delaying the setting of standards until teacher knowledge and confidence about what works with different groups of students is developed may be more appropriate and equitable.

As important, we find classroom teachers need the support and resources to learn and adapt their approaches so students with diverse needs and backgrounds are able to meet standards. For example, in schools where special education teachers work along side classroom teachers, regular teachers learned how special education students can be helped to achieve the same standard. Moreover, several special education teachers noted that these teachers realized that their students and their needs are not that different from other students.

Tensions in Standards Development

Our study confirms that schools face numerous dilemmas in developing standards that highlight the complexity of implementing any standards at the local level. One key issue is who should be involved in developing these standards. Different meanings for standards and which standards are considered important depend upon who is involved, as illustrated by one school's local employer survey which set standards for developing the entire school curriculum (see box on next page).

Differing School and Community Standards for Student Success

Through local employer surveys, one high school discovered that the school and local business community's definitions of what students should know and be able to do to be successful differed. Of the major qualities employers listed (i.e., (1) responsibility; (2) reliability and trustworthiness; (3) ability to communicate well; (4) cooperation; (5) thinking and reasoning skills; (6) reading, writing and basic math; and (7) specific vocational skills), behavioral qualities were those most valued by prospective employers. This is in contrast to the school's definitions. As the principal noted: "The first five qualities listed by employers were not things we had been teaching to. We teach to basic skills and literacy, but those items didn't start showing up (on employer surveys) until 6 or 7."

Not just prospective employers, but parents, teachers and students may all hold different ideas about what is critical for students to know and be able to do. And different conclusions may be reached depending upon who is included in these discussions. For example, in some communities, especially for language minority parents, English proficiency is often a primary goal and outcome for students. As with the development of alternative assessments, involvement of parents and students as well as teachers is paramount – not only to avoid future problems with "buy-in," but to ensure that these standards can be used to enhance student learning and performance. This need to be inclusive is consistent with other research (Olsen, et al., 1994) as well as recent discussions on LEP students and systemic education reform (August, 1994).

Considerable tension remains around how the movement toward "world-class" academic standards is related to other types of standards, such as broad learning outcomes not related to content and district grade-level expectancies. We found many schools that were struggling to define and develop standards also trying to prioritize their implementation relative to other restructuring outcomes, district expectancies and accountability requirements. Since considerable time and effort has been spent building consensus around developing broad learning outcomes as part of the restructuring planning process, merely discounting such outcomes — in favor of standards development — is frustrating for schools.

In short, linking learning outcomes that are already developed with specific content standards is necessary to maintain momentum and enthusiasm; this will also clearly convey to practitioners that standards are not simply a new fad that will eventually fade away. The risk of not reconciling these definitional problems is in further fragmentation of restructuring efforts. For standards to lend cohesion, there must first be consensus about the standards themselves

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and whether they are the singular driving force for schoolwide change efforts.

Measuring Student Success: Assessment Development

We found that these schools have multiple measures of student learning and outcomes available; however, these measures are frequently neither well integrated nor used by schools to assess how all students are progressing in relation to the new practices. More importantly, seldom are these measures tied directly to standards or changes in curriculum and instructional practices.

Types and Layers of Assessment

Schools already have many standardized assessments that serve various purposes, such as testing for placement of students with special needs, or as part of school accountability schemes required by districts. All schools we visited have standardized tests and assessments required by the state and district. For instance, California's CLAS tests were introduced during the last year of our study. In addition, most districts required some norm- or criterion-referenced tests as part of the district's accountability schemes as shown in Table 3. Other standardized tests are required to place special needs students or as accountability and progress measures for certain programs, i.e., limited English proficient and Title I (Chapter 1) students.

Table 3A: Student Assessments in Elementary Schools[6]	
Elementary **Suburban** **S. California**	• District requires CRT, MAT6, portfolios in language arts and math (K-3) and performance "exhibitions" for reading (grade 3), language arts and math (grade 5). • Spanish speakers take APRENDA test. • Rubrics in math compared to CLAS scores; language arts rubric in development; neither standardized across school.
Elementary **Rural** **C. California**	• District requires CTBS and CAT5. • Spanish speakers take SABE test. • All teachers trained and have started to develop or use portfolios.
Elementary **Urban** **N. California**	• District requires CAT5 or SABE depending upon language dominance; data disaggregated by grade level, classroom and subject. • All LEP students take the LAS annually; portfolio and audio tapes of student progress also kept. • Kindergarten classrooms used school-produced child development assessment and will use it to create a developmental report card. • Grade 1-3 students take a standard cloze test which is placed in students' portfolios; Spanish language cloze tests are under development. • Piloting math portfolios and language assessment report cards using locally adapted (district or school) standards.
Elementary **Suburban** **S. California**	• District requires criterion-referenced tests in language and math (i.e., LAPA and MAPA). • Spanish speakers take APRENDA test. • Begun to pilot portfolios in some lower grades classrooms.
Elementary **Urban** **S. California**	• District requires CAT^2. • All LEP students take IDEA test. • For Chapter 1 (and before it), school selected MAT6 for grades 3 and 5, Brigantz for kindergarten and CAT^2 for grades 1, 2 and 4. • Principal reviews test data with teachers on a classroom-by-classroom basis. • Schoolwide performance-based assessments for writing.
Elementary **Rural** **N. California**	• District requires CTBS or SABE, depending on language dominance. • All students tested in language proficiency with BSM (Bilingual Syntax Measure) and ADEPT (district-designed assessment). • First graders tested on Reading Recovery (RR) diagnostic survey and Former RR students tested annually. • Kindergarten students' literacy level assessed for Reading Recovery via Concepts of Print; others take Primary Academic Lab for assessing need for after-school supplementary reading program. • Staff piloting a locally developed writing rubric.

6 See Volume II, Appendix A for descriptions of different types of assessments.

Table 3B: Student Assessments in Secondary Schools (continued)	
Middle **Suburban** **S. California**	• District requires CTBS, CRT, MAT6. • Spanish speakers take SABE test. • Student portfolios implemented schoolwide; piloting electronic portfolios. • Student-led conferencing has student present portfolio evidence to older peers (incl. high school) in November & May, to set and assess performance goals (NEPs can do in Spanish). • District requires CTBS.
Middle **Suburban** **S. California**	• Spanish speakers take SABE. • Some experimentation with portfolios and other forms of authentic assessments (e.g. math rubrics). • Some self-esteem tests used with LEP students.
Middle **Urban** **N. California**	• District requires CTBS annually of all students. • LEP students take LAS test. • Classes in two houses are experimenting with portfolios in English or history classes. • Performance-based assessment consistently used in PE and some houses are beginning to experiment with it via projects, journal writing and oral presentations. • Standardized tests for certain subjects such as science used by some teachers. • As part of health project, performance and other assessments will be developed that are aligned with health standards (tied to state curriculum frameworks).
High **Suburban** **C. California**	• District requires SAT8. • Performance-based assessment has largely replaced seat time in the awarding of credits (e.g., use of portfolios). • Evaluate student progress on weekly basis in two areas: classroom performance and behavior. Students enter at level three and can move up the "ladder" — high end rewarded with fieldtrips; low end triggers parent conferences. Two weekly lists kept, one a petition generated by students to move up and one a warning list generated by teachers. Teachers vote each week, requiring at least three in favor to move a student up the ladder.

At the school site level, we found many schools developing and/or implementing alternative measures of success, albeit not always standardized across classrooms and/or grade levels. Portfolios are a good example of an assessment tool that many schools have either experimented with or piloted. Yet, the criteria and standards to define what comprises a portfolio and how to judge that work is rarely uniform across a school. For example, in nearly all schools we visited, a few classrooms or grade levels were experimenting with student portfolios. But only one school used portfolios schoolwide and had developed a process for scoring them.

Similarly, developing rubrics, especially in writing and math, was also popular among schools we visited. But more often than not, different grade levels or houses set the standard, rather than the school or district.

Assessing Performance Goals: Electronic Portfolios and Student-led Conferences

In this middle school, portfolios were used schoolwide to "provide the evidence of (student) achievement" with student-led conferencing as the "venue for sharing individual levels of (student) success." The school piloted an electronic portfolio with videos and other multimedia products created by students as evidence of their achievement in performance levels for different subjects. Student-led conferencing, where students present their portfolios to older peers and parents, were held twice a year, first to set performance goals and then to assess student progress and share evidence of achievement toward their performance goals.

In our research, we found that potential tools for gaining a schoolwide approach might include developing performance-based report cards and other systems for communicating student performance to students and parents, such as student-led conferencing. At one elementary school, for example, rubrics for writing and processes for scoring writing samples were developed separately at several grade levels. Over time, staff designed and implemented a developmental, performance-based report card that is rubric-based — instead of grade-level-based — which staff believe better reflects what kids should know and be able to do, regarding their writing skills. To assess writing skill development, staff at this school now also have a school-developed rubric that is scored schoolwide and articulated between grade levels. Student-led conferencing, where students at a middle school present portfolio evidence to older students and parents twice a year is another innovative example for communicating student performance that is used schoolwide and viewed positively by students, parents and teachers.

We also found schools have considerable anecdotal evidence on changes in students' attitude and participation — outcomes teachers frequently define as important. However, such information is not typically or systematically recorded by schools. For example, several schools' staff noted decreases in discipline problems and fights or increases in student verbal participation in class as evidence that a particular restructuring effort is successful. But this evidence is neither regularly documented nor comparatively analyzed.

Use of Assessments

With few exceptions, we found the vast majority of externally required assessments were rarely used by schools. For example, except for diagnostic and placement assessments for special needs students, most principals and staff reported that standardized tests required by the district or state were rarely used to monitor progress or modify practices. Schools cited two major reasons: (1) the results do not inform classroom practice, and/or (2) tests are not well aligned to the changes in curriculum and instruction in which schools are engaged. Test score data, for example, can provide evidence of different groups of students' progress but not the kind of information helpful to changing classroom practices.

Consistent with California Tomorrow's research on restructuring schools (Olsen, et al, 1994), we also found that schools typically do not disaggregate their data to see whether the results are the same for different student sub-groups. For example, many schools have measures for changes in student behavior such as attendance or mobility, but these measures are rarely compared over time or disaggregated to examine effects for different student sub-groups. This is ironic since whether and how well certain practices work for every student can be discerned from closer analysis of disaggregated data.

There are, of course, exceptions. In schools we visited, whether the data was used was often a matter of personality (i.e., whether the school had a "data junkie," an individual who felt using data to inform decisions was key and who volunteered to do so). For example, one principal reviewed the results of standardized test scores with each teacher to assess what classroom practices might be changed in light of classroom test score results.

Tensions in Assessment Development

One major issue confronting schools is the weak link between standards and assessments. Because schools are at different stages of

developing standards, or may have begun developing authentic assessments first, methods for measuring the standards or outcomes are not always identified or clear. In addition, as shown in Table 3, alternative assessment approaches are being tried not only at the classroom, organizational sub-unit and school level, but also at the district and state levels. Thus, while multiple measures may exist, currently they are not well integrated or linked in ways that make it easy for schools to assess how well particular outcomes are being met.

Consistent with other research, we found uniformity among standards and the pervasiveness of their use related to the level of collegial interaction among teachers. In schools where teachers spent more time planning and working together, we found greater consensus around moving toward ***schoolwide*** assessments that are linked to specific standards. This tendency is less likely in schools where teachers work in isolation or in traditional grade-level ways.

In addition to uniformity across classrooms or grade levels, several schools we visited encountered conflicts over the prioritization of outcomes. With limited time and resources, for example, one school felt pressured to assess district accountability outcomes, rather than the goals they felt were most important. More commonly, we found schools and districts often agreed on goals for students but disagreed on how to measure those goals. For example, while many schools and districts may agree that improved student academic performance is the goal, they often differ sharply on how that performance should be measured. Among all schools, we found individual student growth, as opposed to relative growth or comparisons to other students, was often valued most by classroom teachers. In contrast, districts often favor standardized measures to obtain the comparative data for their resource decisions.

The use of multiple measures, performance-based report cards and a combination of approaches, rather than greater standardization of authentic assessments[7], are alternatives currently being explored by a few schools and districts. For example, one district has a sophisticated school accountability scheme that has indicators required of all schools, as well as optional, school-defined measures of each major dimension. The idea is that measures considered important and more valid by individual schools can also be included with more standardized measures. According to school staff, however, one concern is that

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7 Whether more authentic measures of student performance should be held to the same standards of reliability and validity as standardized tests is the subject of current debate.

school boards will favor the standardized measures as more valid than school-defined ones. Performance-based report cards are another approach that schools in our study were working towards that appears to hold promise. It balances a teacher's need for information on student growth while providing the comparative data for levels beyond the classroom. For this reason, combining such report cards with portfolios is reported as a promising approach in other research on restructuring[8].

Perhaps the major dilemma that all schools confront is ensuring that special needs students, especially language minority students, are included in the alternative assessments that are designed. How to measure student content knowledge in their primary language or develop alternative assessments that are sensitive to the needs and experiences of students from different cultures poses a dilemma for nearly all the schools we visited. It was not uncommon to find schools serving students from more than 15 different language groups. Where significant numbers of students were part of the same language group — usually Spanish — some schools did attempt to include these students in new assessments that were designed, such as oral presentations or portfolios given and/or written in Spanish. Yet, within such schools, students from other language groups whose numbers were fewer (several Southeast Asian language groups and recent Russian or Somalian immigrants are good examples) were more difficult to include because schools often lacked the necessary resources to address not only their assessment, but their instructional needs as well.

Defining and Measuring School Success: School Reflection or Self-Evaluation as an Emerging Trend

Being able to monitor how well changes and improvements that schools implement meet every student's needs is an important component of school restructuring and systemic reform efforts. Many schools defined success in terms of: (1) completed successful implementation of a particular program or set of strategies; and/or (2) teacher satisfaction, e.g., with empowerment and/or school work environment. For a few schools, these are ends in themselves, as opposed to a means to the ultimate goal of changes that positively impact student learning outcomes. This is fairly consistent with literature that points to schools' restructuring efforts often lacking a student focus (David, 1989; Wohlstetter and Mohrman, 1994).

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8 Preliminary findings from a study of school/community-based management schools in Hawaii.

Among other schools, especially those advanced in their restructuring efforts, we found a real desire to be more self-reflective and evaluative of their efforts. The desire to monitor and reflect on school progress stemmed from several sources. For some schools, this emerged because they found it difficult to identify which combination of innovative practices was making a difference for students. For others, they wanted to know answers to these questions to maintain high staff enthusiasm and motivation. And still for others, the impetus for becoming more inquiry-oriented stemmed from the belief that their efforts were, indeed, helping students; they wanted the evidence to prove it. While varying in their impetus, schools that were developing a critical self-study or self-evaluation process were all at about the same level of development (e.g., major changes had been implemented) and agreed that outcomes and a broad vision were important.

Many schools are moving toward a more "inquiry" or self-evaluative orientation with principals supporting and often leading these efforts. Retreats, action research projects and extended faculty meetings or professional development days to discuss school accomplishments are some of the promising approaches that schools have tried. One elementary school held annual and voluntary weekend retreats for reflection and planning. In addition, several principals used whole faculty meetings at the end of the year to discuss accomplishments and other evidence of meeting particular school and student goals. One middle school's training in collaborative action research has given staff the tools to evaluate the success and impact of their many curricular and instructional innovations by becoming teacher researchers.

The California Department of Education (CDE) has also shaped the self-evaluation process. Several schools we visited had opted to participate in the Protocol, a self-study process focused on student learning and outcomes that is required of schools participating in California's SB1274 restructuring initiative. Designed to get schools to focus on how their efforts affect student outcomes and provide evidence via student work, the process also includes a presentation and a critique of a school's findings by other schools. Similarly, in another school we visited, the principal used the self-study and preparation for California's Program Quality Review (PQR) as the means to evaluate school progress in its restructuring effort.

Generally, we found schools eager to know how well they are doing, but they do not have the experience, skills (e.g., methodology training and understanding of statistics) or often the time necessary

to evaluate their efforts. None of the schools we visited had the type of student information system that would allow them to track large groups of students or individuals over time or to easily disaggregate data.

A few schools collected measures of instructional effectiveness. In addition to one elementary school principal's individual conferences with classroom teachers about standardized test scores, teachers at one middle school engaged in peer feedback and review through teacher-led conferences. Teachers gathered evidence (lesson plans, training, student work and feedback from students and parents) for portfolios that were then shared and reviewed twice a year to assess instructional effectiveness.

In summary, schools are struggling to define and develop standards about what all students should be learning, as well as the appropriate assessments for knowing how well students — especially language minority students — are meeting these standards. These efforts are occurring in a context where other restructuring outcomes and district and state accountability requirements compete for school attention. Consistent with developing a community of learners, school reflection or self-evaluation is one promising approach to building the capacity of schools to deal with these issues on a schoolwide basis and, perhaps, to better address and align numerous accountability requirements.

Enabling Factors

As part of this study, we examined other components of school change that were identified by schools as integral to their success or failure. We found several factors that enabled schools to continue moving forward despite set-backs in their change efforts to provide a better learning environment for all students. These enabling factors of systemic reform included: (1) stability of vision and leadership provided by school and district administrators; (2) structure and inclusiveness of school-based decision-making; and (3) integration of preventive interventions that directly support student learning while including parents.

Continuous, Visionary Leadership

The leadership, vision and continuity provided by school and district administrators was almost always critical to maintaining a school's momentum and its ability to stay on track. As important were principals who often advised staff to make time to be self-evaluative about their efforts. This included workshops to develop ways to assess not only what students were learning but the overall benefit of change efforts schoolwide. In such schools, staff often attributed a school's reform success to a principal, restructuring coordinator or district support person who championed their cause, helped them overcome bureaucratic obstacles and ensured that they stayed on course.

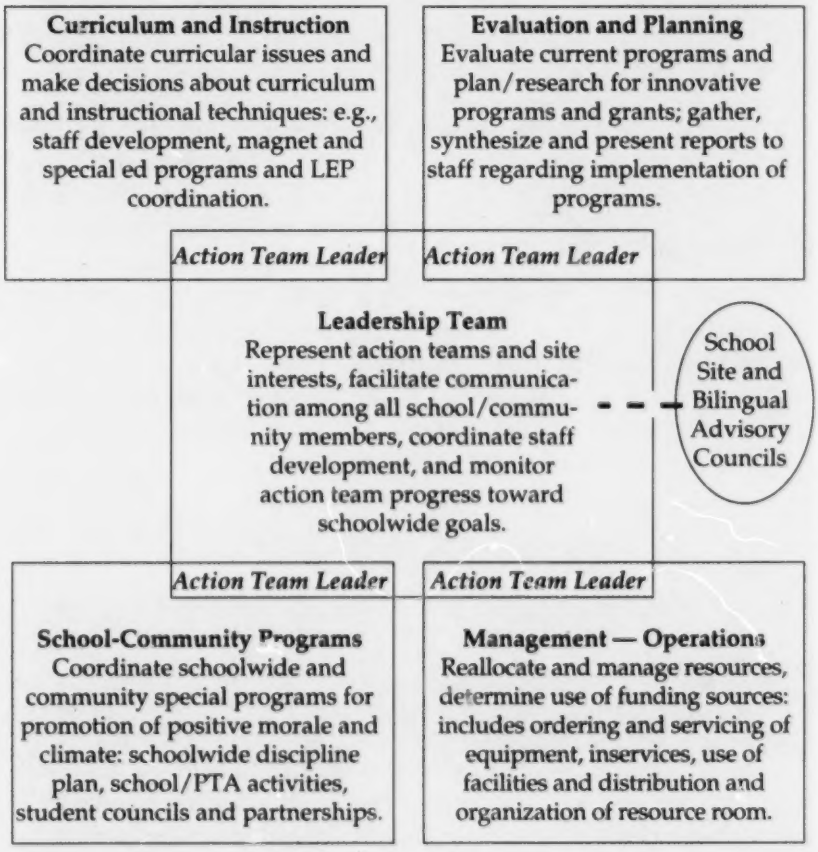
Conversely, and not surprisingly, staff dissatisfaction and confusion often resulted from lack of leadership and administrative staff turnover. We found considerable changes in leadership among the schools and districts in our sample. For example, half the schools experienced at least one change in leadership during the three years that we followed their efforts. Similarly, all ten districts experienced a change in superintendents. Transitions were usually smoother when internal staff moved into open positions (e.g., an assistant superintendent became superintendent). In one school, four different principals served during three years. Change efforts in these schools, perhaps not coincidentally, appeared the most fragmented, unevenly implemented and non-cumulative, i.e., not building from one lesson to another.

The Nature of School-Based Decision-Making

Another factor that helped a school maintain its vision and continuity of change was a decision-making process that actually empowered staff and/or the community so that leadership for restructuring was spread throughout the school. This way, continuity was

Site-Based Decision-Making: An Elementary School's Experience

In this school, site-based decision-making is viewed as a "joint planning and problem-solving process that seeks to improve the quality of working life and education for our school." Here, every staff member is required to hold membership on a minimum of one of four action teams meeting at least monthly (see figure below). The leadership team includes the leaders of the action teams as well as parent representatives, a classified employee and two members from special programs (e.g., Title I, LEP) or interest groups (e.g., union representative). Action and leadership team meetings are held on alternate weeks to facilitate communication. Faculty are expected to meet weekly for either action team, teaching team, general school business or staff development meetings. In short, the decision-making process is key to this school's restructuring effort — it's the way staff communicate and keep abreast of decisions and plans they make and problems that arise.


Curriculum and Instruction
Coordinate curricular issues and make decisions about curriculum and instructional techniques: e.g., staff development, magnet and special ed programs and LEP coordination.
Evaluation and Planning
Evaluate current programs and plan/research for innovative programs and grants; gather, synthesize and present reports to staff regarding implementation of programs.
Action Team Leader
Action Team Leader
Leadership Team
Represent action teams and site interests, facilitate communication among all school/community members, coordinate staff development, and monitor action team progress toward schoolwide goals.
School Site and Bilingual Advisory Councils
Action Team Leader
Action Team Leader
School-Community Programs
Coordinate schoolwide and community special programs for promotion of positive morale and climate: schoolwide discipline plan, school/PTA activities, student councils and partnerships.
Management — Operations
Reallocate and manage resources, determine use of funding sources: includes ordering and servicing of equipment, inservices, use of facilities and distribution and organization of resource room.

maintained even when a principal or key resource person left the school.

Decision-making structures and processes that were more inclusive were also likely to lead to more coherent and integrated change efforts. Who was at the table when key decisions were made about grouping strategies and curriculum could affect how well these plans were implemented. At one school, a decision-making process had been established that included all staff (from teachers and resource specialists to office staff and community workers); not only could everyone explain their change efforts, but staff were aware of the dilemmas and challenges posed by their choices (see box).

We found that districts and the state could play a key role in providing momentum for new decision-making structures. For example, the state's initial application process for participation in ESS and SB1274 required an inclusive planning period, which often helped schools establish a decision-making structure that was used (with some refinements) throughout their implementation

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efforts. Likewise, districts moving toward decentralization or site-based management could provide the extra incentive to design new decision-making processes.

Learning Focused Prevention and Parent Involvement

Schools implemented a variety of preventive interventions for students, including programs to meet their affective, social and emotional needs. The purpose of most of these programs, as stated by schools, was to support student learning in the classroom. Some strategies, however, were more directly tied to what students were learning in the classroom. For example, while some schools had programs that worked on students' self-esteem by providing structured opportunities to discuss their feelings, others integrated discussions of self-esteem with learning activities around writing or reading and/or provided tutoring support. In light of the variety of interventions available, preventive strategies directly tied to helping students learn appeared to be the most promising simply because they integrated, instead of fragmented, staff time and efforts. And many staff felt these strategies were enabling them to better meet the range of student needs in the classroom.

Perhaps the most popular strategy is the use of "student study teams" comprised of teachers, counselors, categorical specialists and others who meet regularly to design and implement an individualized learning plan for a child. This model — an extension of an approach used in programs for serving students with disabilities — is now used with other non-disabled students who are struggling in school.

The Expanded Student Study Team [SST] Process

In an attempt to better assist students with general academic or behavioral difficulties, one school modified their SST process for special education students to create a "problem-solving team" [PST] for all students struggling in school. As opposed to the SST, the PST includes parent(s) and the student in a meeting with teachers and other resource staff such as the counselor, nurse, special education teacher and school psychologist. The child's strengths and weaknesses from both their own and their parents' points of view are considered alongside specialists' opinions and a review of a student's academic, emotional and health regard. As the principal said, "Teachers, parents and anybody else who works with the students are involved. Parents will say things like, 'I didn't know that you watch them that closely and are so concerned.'"

Another strategy was to integrate a parent component to learning. One approach trained parents and equipped them with skills to help their children in the classroom. In one elementary school, for example, parents attended computer and English as a Second Language classes. As one staff member re-

marked, "We concluded parents really needed something for themselves. You must feel you're capable of helping your child succeed, but you must also feel you're able to succeed yourself." Other schools integrated parent experiences into curricular activities. One high school's writing project required students to conduct in-depth interviews of their parents' immigration experiences. For many students, it was the first time they had explored their family history. At the same time, these experiences gave parents a closer look at what their children were learning.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Although we visited only ten California schools, they represent a broad cross-section of elementary and middle schools with diverse student populations committed to improving the learning success of all students. From these schools, we learned valuable lessons about the challenges and issues in systemic reform and how decision-makers at all levels can play key roles in supporting it. In previous chapters, we organized and discussed these issues as schools experienced them — i.e., the view of systemic reform from the bottom up. As we now turn to the implications of our work, our discussion is framed according to the model of systemic reform more widely known and accepted at the "top" — i.e., the vision of coordinated improvement based on standards, curriculum, assessments and teacher development. The report concludes with specific suggestions on how school, district, state and federal decision-makers can support coherent change efforts aimed at upgrading learning for all students.

Policy Implications: Coherent Systemic Reform And Inclusion At All Levels

Schools are moving towards curriculum-based systemic reform but, for the most part, links between standards, curriculum and instruction and assessments are not yet in place. Our work clearly shows that schools are working on each of these components with considerable progress in creating a high level curriculum and new ways of teaching this curriculum and, to a lesser extent, experimenting with alternative assessments and developing standards. But our study found that awareness of the "big picture" (i.e., the model of systemic reform described above) and the connections between components of that model are not well understood at the local level.

One major implication of our work is that clarifying relationships among reform efforts and activities — either within or across state, district or school levels — is key to moving systemic reform forward. In California, for example, how state curriculum frameworks are linked to subject matter projects and CLAS is not always clear to classroom teachers. Similarly, questions as to how assessments can inform classroom practice and how school-developed assessments align with district and state mandated testing and other accountability requirements continue to challenge many schools. Schools need a clearer understanding of the priorities and purpose among different types of goals, outcomes and standards set for students by various levels within the system. Likewise, agreement on appropriate assessments for measuring these learning outcomes and standards would assist schools in creating more coherent curricular and instructional improvements.

Another major theme is the need to ensure that persons knowledgeable and concerned about the education of special needs students, especially those with limited English proficiency, are included in systemic reform efforts — and all its components — from the very beginning. Schools that appeared to have the best success in meeting the needs of these students: (1) considered their needs from the outset; and (2) had professional development plans for instructing them. Whether school efforts focus on establishing what students should know and be able to do or on organizing instruction to best deliver that content, teachers — both classroom and resource teachers — need the time and support to discuss with colleagues ways that specific standards can be mastered by and assessed for every student. Similarly, knowing how to identify and map the learning needs of (and resources for) students with special needs is vital for engaging in restructuring that benefits all students. Therefore, any planning needs to draw upon the expertise of a wide range of instructional staff and parents who represent diverse students.

Our research suggests that these themes — connections, alignment and inclusion — are important to supporting schools in systemic reform. From a school perspective, this national movement toward systemic reform occurs alongside a myriad of other school reforms as well as district, state and federal requirements. Therefore, knowing the links and including all stakeholders in planning and development activities are key.

High Standards For All Students

Developing high standards for all students is a good example of where a broad range of groups, including parents and students, needs to be involved in developing a common vision of what students should know and be able to do. Our research suggests that there is a great deal of confusion about standards and how they relate to existing goals and outcomes for students already defined at the school, district and other levels. Moreover, schools often have trouble reconsidering how standards should apply to students with special needs. While schools in our sample embrace the notion that the same standards should apply to all students, in practice, different criteria for meeting standards were used, especially for special education and LEP students. Regular classroom teachers were struggling, for example, with how much credit should be given for effort or motivation when grading special education students. Demonstration of how standards can be met by different groups of students is often critical for consistent implementation. And in some schools with shifting student demographics (e.g., ethnically and/or

economically), changes in teachers' attitudes as well as the demonstration that all students are capable of reaching high standards are needed. Since most schools are just beginning to define and develop content and performance standards, inclusion from the outset of key stakeholders and persons knowledgeable about how LEP students learn best is possible and less problematic than if standards were already developed.

Our work suggests that valid entry points to systemic reform do not always have to begin with the development of standards. We found that developing standards is not a linear process; it is an iterative process that builds from multiple points of entry. Schools can recognize the importance of, and begin to develop, *schoolwide* standards (i.e., standards accepted across all grade levels and classrooms) via other entry points, such as experience in developing writing rubrics or performance-based report cards. Delaying standards can be beneficial depending upon the stage of development or readiness of staff to participate. The early stage of standards development in most schools can be seen as an advantage, because there are many more opportunities to ensure that planning and professional development opportunities are inclusive and reflect the best available knowledge about how special needs students learn.

Coordinated, Challenging Curriculum and How It Is Delivered

How challenging content can be most effectively taught to all students so that learning improves for diverse student populations is key to systemic reform and, as our research implies, should be considered at the outset of school improvement efforts. For example, decisions about how students and teachers are grouped for instruction need to be considered in light of the number and concentration of language groups in a school and the resources available to serve them. There is a common misperception that heterogeneous grouping by skill or language level, as a strategy by itself, results in equal access to a core curriculum. In fact, if implemented incorrectly (e.g., without concomitant changes to regular classroom instruction and curriculum delivery), heterogeneous grouping could exacerbate, rather than remedy, an inequitable situation. Students left in classrooms to "sink or swim" without adequate instructional support could be worse off than when they were pulled out of the classroom or tracked in self-contained classrooms for extended periods. At the same time, homogeneous grouping may be more effective for some students part of the time. As many teachers pointed out, homogeneous grouping by skill and language allows them greater time to structure a more individualized lesson plan that may better support

learning. The catch is to ensure that such groups remain fluid and that students are assessed and reassigned regularly. Schools need opportunities to learn about and model combinations of grouping strategies that best suit their diverse student populations.

Although schools were experimenting with curriculum and instructional enrichment strategies, most schools we visited still did not have a uniform, schoolwide core curriculum — guided by clear standards or goals that articulate what and how students should learn. Their efforts were, instead, sporadic, short-lived and spotty in implementation. Curriculum enrichment has focused primarily on project-driven, thematic integration across subject matter areas and interdisciplinary teaming. In addition, curriculum was made more meaning-centered and relevant by capitalizing on and building knowledge from the personal experiences of students and their families.

One implication is the need for better articulation of effort within and across grade levels. Yet, in practice, our research suggests that this is difficult to do all at once given school approaches to curriculum change (i.e., incremental, developmental and pervasive). Curriculum enrichment that is most pervasive and coherent has capitalized upon formal decision-making structures used for schoolwide planning. These enrichment efforts have also benefited from the continuous guidance of an administrator or set of leaders. In existing schools (instead of schools beginning anew) better articulated curriculum and instructional strategies begin in developmental stages, allowing teachers and school staff to go through phases of growth and adjustments, as well as providing time to see what works for all or different groups of students. These schools appeared to have staff who were united in their understanding about what they were trying to accomplish. Over time, these efforts become more pervasive.

Assessing Student Performance and Accountability

We learned that schools frequently have multiple measures of student learning and outcomes, but these measures are neither well integrated nor are they used to assess how well students are doing in relation to the new curricular and instructional practices in use. Most schools lack the skills, experience and student information systems to examine how well certain practices work generally, as well as specifically, for different special groups of students (e.g., LEP, special education). Schools that had begun the process of reflection and self-evaluation had school administrators skilled and

actively supportive of it. Learning how to disaggregate the available data — and having the tools to do so — is an important step toward knowing whether all students are learning what they should in important content areas.

At the same time, while some schools are developing measures that more authentically assess what students know and are able to do in particular content areas, assessing LEP students in similar ways remains a challenge. Most schools and, even, districts lack the resources and/or skills to develop appropriate assessments for the broad range of languages spoken by their students. The implication is that practitioners need resources and partnerships for development efforts that focus on flexible, progress-oriented and student sensitive assessments tied to agreed upon goals of what all students should know and can do. States with substantial numbers of LEP students in given language groups along with the federal government need to play stronger roles in supporting the development of appropriate assessments in other languages.

Another implication is that the different purposes of assessments need to be recognized. Assessments that inform teacher practice may not address the need for comparable data to guide policy decisions about resources. Student expectations, goals and accountability requirements abound at all levels of the system — state and district, as well as community. Conflicts over which outcomes (i.e., school, district and state outcomes) should take precedence and how these should be measured add to the challenge of developing the evaluative capacities of schools.

Ongoing Professional Development

We found that unstructured staff development can yield greater experimentation. Yet, when deliberately focused, staff development can become a powerful tool for coherent change. Overall, the pattern of staff development is usually a school's primary vehicle for change. Fragmented restructuring is usually accompanied by piecemeal professional development. Conversely, when a school has undergone radical, comprehensive change, it is usually because training has been similarly intensive and schoolwide. This is not to say that all comprehensive change has a penetrating effect. Some schoolwide efforts are superficial in implementation. Schools that focus on one or two goals around a developmental change process can have a stronger systemic effect. In becoming more focused, schools also recognize that staff development builds teachers' capacity to measure and analyze the impact of their efforts on

student learning — at both an individual and schoolwide level. Building teacher capacity in the longer term, then, is key to more coherent and coordinated efforts. School and district professional development plans that also build teacher experience and expertise in instructing LEP students can help ensure that all students have opportunities to achieve the high standards expected in this move toward more systemic reform.

Our work suggests that the need for ***system*** coordination and coherence grows stronger as individual schools begin to make the kinds of changes desired. Addressing student transition points through standards and better articulation becomes more important in order to ensure that the "benefits" of particular reform strategies are not lost. What happens to students when they move on to another level of schooling (be it middle school, high school, college or work) is a question teachers at the lower level often asked. Though we were not able to follow students in this study, other evidence suggests that this is a valid question. For example, in an ongoing study of restructuring schools[9], one elementary school placed a heavy emphasis on student reflection and self-assessment. Former students of this elementary school who were interviewed expressed their frustration and disillusionment with learning and assessment opportunities in the more traditional middle schools they were attending.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered for participants at different levels who wish to support continuous and coherent improvement processes in schools.

For example, schools can:

- **Ensure participation of a range of staff and stakeholders in the standards development process and in experiences that prepare them to develop standards.** For standards to have meaning and be understood at the local level, practitioners need to be involved in developing them. Apart from participating in developing specific schoolwide standards, school administrators need to create opportunities and experiences for staff that demonstrate how standards are met; for example, by visiting schools in similar contexts or giving classroom and resource

9 Preliminary findings from a study of nine schools participating in Hawaii's School/Community-Based Management initiative — a statewide initiative aimed at site-based management and school improvement.

teachers the time and support to discuss how specific standards are met for all students. In order to build a common vision of what and how students learn, parents should be involved in the design and planning of the standards schools set.

- **Ensure that restructuring plans consider the language context of the school and the time it takes to establish curricular and instructional changes and ensure that experimentation with different teaching and learning practices is guided by clearly established stages of exploration, implementation and evaluation**. For example, restructuring plans would benefit from considering how to meet diverse students' needs at the outset of planning by assessing the initial conditions of the school's language context (e.g., the number of language groups and concentration of students who speak these languages) and resources available to meet diverse language needs. These can best be accomplished by including those school staff who work closest with LEP students and students with disabilities in decision-making surrounding curriculum enrichment and instructional strategies for schoolwide implementation, as well as the development of appropriate assessments.

- **Develop ways to measure whether student learning is improving as a result of grouping strategies and other curriculum and instructional strategies adopted**. For example, school administrators need to create and support a climate that values reflection, especially data-driven reflection so that learning which strategies make a difference for what group of students is part of the normal school routines. In part, this can be done by developing schedules and polices that provide staff with the time for reflection and self-evaluation to examine disaggregated data.

- **Develop long-term professional development *plans* and use specific data collection procedures (e.g., surveys, interview protocols, observations) to determine whether staff development activities are cumulative (i.e., each activity builds a foundation for the next stage of restructuring) and which activities may not be contributing to schoolwide goals**. For example, schools (as well as districts) can plan professional development activities that span more than one school year so that these opportunities can build upon teacher efforts to implement and refine specific practices.

For example, districts can:

- **Assist schools in interpreting and meeting state standards through alignment at the district level, provision of examples and/or opportunities to participate in developing standards and assessments.** Districts can play a key linkage role between the state and schools. For example, districts can support systemic reform by better aligning district curriculum and required assessments to state curriculum frameworks, as well as state and federal accountability requirements. Districts can support school efforts to develop standards with examples of how academic content and performance standards are related to those already in use, such as grade-level expectancies, and to performance standards or indicators already required by the district. Finally, districts can provide school staff with more opportunities to participate in development activities at the district level, such as developing district standards or aligning district and state curricula.

- **Provide inservice and technical assistance on appropriate curriculum enrichment and instructional strategies for certain groups of students**. For example, districts can provide inservices on how to change the composition of student-teacher groupings (e.g., switch to "families" or multi-track, year-round schools) without disrupting effective grouping strategies associated with existing programs or language development models. Districts can review school restructuring plans to determine whether the proposed grouping strategies consider what works best for children with certain learning needs under various conditions. Similarly, districts can also review school curriculum enrichment and instructional strategies to see whether they relate to state/district standards and assessment practices. This would encompass not just measures of individual student achievement at the classroom level but measures that decide how cohorts of students are doing relative to other cohorts schoolwide, districtwide and statewide.

- **Develop policies that build dialogue within schools and encourage resource sharing and joint planning among schools, especially feeder schools**. For example, district policies that allow schools pupil-free professional development days can provide an entire school staff with the time necessary to develop schoolwide approaches and expertise in certain areas. Likewise, district strategies that encourage resource sharing can stretch limited resources. For example, districts can

pair funded schools with non-funded schools committed to restructuring (as one district in our sample did) so that professional development activities can get "more bang for the buck." Forming clusters of schools, especially clusters of feeder schools, is another example of ways to encourage ongoing joint planning and discussion about smoothing the transitions that students need to make between different levels of schooling, and improving the articulation between grade levels and schools.

- **Consider leadership continuity in staffing decisions**. For example, in reassigning principals, districts should consider where schools are in their development and implementation of restructuring plans, so as not to disrupt the continuity in leadership that is critical in the early stages of change efforts.

For example, states can:

- **Clarify and clearly communicate the links between existing state reform efforts and accountability requirements**. For example, from a California state perspective, CLAS has been seen as a driving force for the state frameworks and curriculum reform; but the link between California's CLAS system and the frameworks is not always clear at the local level. In designing or modifying state accountability systems, states have an opportunity to better link these assessments more directly to emerging curriculum frameworks and other standards adopted at a state level.

- **Develop accountability systems that take into account special needs (especially LEP) students**. States also have the opportunity to design or modify their accountability systems to ensure that special needs students are incorporated into systemic reform efforts. For example, states with substantial numbers of LEP students in certain language groups can develop (or borrow) content area assessments in languages other than English.

- **Continue to send the message that equity issues are not addressed simply by balancing the demographic composition of classrooms**. For example, states can disseminate information about effective instructional and curricular practices in different grouping situations — e.g., the assessment and reassignment guidelines that need to be in place if students are grouped homogeneously.

- **From schools that have engaged in coherent, systemic change processes tied to student learning objectives, disseminate models or examples of professional development plans and student information systems that work; and/or provide support in designing such plans and systems.**

- **Create and/or support networks of schools and districts to facilitate more coherent *and* coordinated reforms**. For example, in California the ESS network of schools and districts provided one form of support for continuous learning outside of one's district. Likewise, schools participating in the SB1274 initiative created opportunities for development and dialogue among schools focused on student learning outcomes through its accountability process. Through such networks, states can encourage districts and schools to engage in professional development planning that is long-term and comprehensive or to share what has been learned about time and cost efficient information systems.

For example, the federal government can:

- **Serve as a clearinghouse and resource generally; and, more specifically, for issues related to instructional materials and assessment of LEP students.** The federal government can play a key role in helping local education agencies meet the needs of *all* students by serving a clearinghouse of information on systemic reform (especially on issues of linking components), and, more specifically, in developing assessments and other basic instructional materials (e.g., dictionaries) in languages other than English. Schools or districts typically focus their limited resources on development of new materials and assessments in languages where the number of students is significant (i.e., English and, sometimes, Spanish) — even though in most schools and districts we visited a significant number of different languages are spoken. One federal role, then, could be to serve as a clearinghouse for assessments developed in other languages by various states and large school districts.

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